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THE SCALP HUNTERS.

THE SCALP HUNTERS;

OR,

ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

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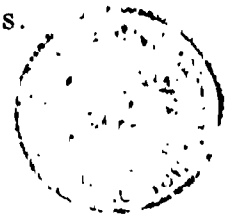
CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF

THE "RIFLE RANGERS."

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

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TO

COMMODORE EDW. W. MOORE,

TEXAS,

FROM HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

ABOUT a year ago, I submitted to the public a book under the title of the "Rifle Rangers." It was prefaced as "truth poetically coloured"—truth for the groundwork, the flowering fancy—fact, enamelled by fiction—a mosaic of romance and reality.

Some have said, that the "poetic colouring" was a thought too vivid. Perhaps it was so; but the general judgment upon that little effort, not only satisfied, but gratified me; and to you, who have pronounced in its favour, I now offer "another of the same."

I shall be quite content, if your sentence upon this be marked by no greater severity.

I regret that my book exhibits no higher purpose than to amuse; but I have endeavoured to enamel its pages with a thousand facts—the result of my own experience. I have endeavoured to paint scenes of a strange land, as they are painted on my memory. If you *cannot* believe them true, may I hope that you will acknowledge their *vraisemblance* ?

But why should I contend for their truthfulness, after declaring myself guilty of no higher aim than to amuse you? I will not, then. Let it *all* pass for a fiction —a novel, if you will—but, in return for this concession on my part, permit me to ask you—do you not think it a "novel kind" of a novel? If you answer this question in the affirmative, then have I won my purpose.

Before going farther, I have two words to say—one of warning to you, and one of apology for myself. My scenes are of a sanguinary nature—some of them extremely so—but, alas! far less red than the realities, from which they were drawn. I know that this is but a lame apology for having depicted them; but I do not wish you to enter upon them unwarned. I am a coarse, crude, and careless writer. I lack those classic sympathies, which enable many of my brethren of the pen to give such elegant expression to their thoughts. If I *must* write, therefore, I am compelled—in order to interest—to lay more stress upon matter than manner—to describe the rude realities, rather than the refinements of thought and life. Moreover, my book is a *trapper* book. It is well known that trappers swear like troopers—some of them, in fact, worse. I have endeavoured to Christianize *my* trappers as much as lay in my power; but,

I fear, this emphatic phraseology is too much a key-stone of their character to be omitted without undoing them altogether. To use a hackneyed figure,. it would be "Hamlet with Hamlet left out."

I, however, see a wide distinction between the *impiety* of a trapper's oath, and the *immorality* of an unchaste episode. The former can only shock the moral nerve for a moment—the latter may impress it for ever.

I trust, reader, that *you* are emancipated from that literary hypocrisy which refuses to perceive this distinction; and, trusting so, with confidence I leave my character in your hands.

MAYNE REID.

LONDON, JUNE, 1851.

THE SCALP-HUNTERS;

OR,

ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

THE WILD WEST.

UNROL the world's map, and look upon the great northern continent of America. Away to the wild west—away toward the setting sun—away beyond many a far meridian—let your eyes wander. Rest them, where golden rivers rise among peaks that carry the eternal snow. Rest them there.

You are looking upon a land whose features are unfurrowed by human hands—still bearing the marks of the Almighty

mould, as upon the morning of creation. A region, whose every object wears the impress of God's image. His ambient spirit lives in the silent grandeur of its mountains, and speaks in the roar of its mighty rivers. A region redolent of romance—rich in the reality of adventure.

Follow me, with the eye of your mind, through scenes of wild beauty, of savage sublimity.

I stand in an open plain. I turn my face to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west; and, on all sides, behold the blue circle of the heavens girdling around me. Nor rock, nor tree, breaks the ring of the horizon. What covers the broad expanse between? Wood? water? grass? No —flowers! As far as my eye can range, it rests only on flowers—on beautiful flowers!

I am looking as on a tinted map—an enamelled picture brilliant with every hue of the prism.

Yonder is golden yellow, where the helianthus turns her dial-like face to the sun. Yonder, scarlet, where the malva erects its red banner. Here is a parterre of the purple monarda—there the euphorbia sheds its silver leaf. Yonder the orange predominates in the showy flowers of the asclepia; and beyond, the eye roams over the pink blossoms of the cleomé.

The breeze stirs them. Millions of corollas are waving their gaudy standards. The tall stalks of the helianthus bend and rise in long undulations, like billows on a golden sea!

They are at rest again. The air is filled with odours, sweet as the perfumes of Araby or Ind. Myriads of insects flap their gay wings—flowers of themselves. The bee-birds skirr around, glancing like stray sunbeams; or, poised on whirring wings, drink from the nectared

cups; and the wild bee, with laden limbs, clings among the honeyed pistils, or leaves for his far hive with a song of joy.

Who planted these flowers? Who hath woven them into these pictured parterres? Nature. It is her richest mantle—richer in its hues than the scarfs of Cashmere.

This is the "weed prairie." It is misnamed. It is *the garden of God.*

* * * *

The scene is changed. I am in a plain as before, with the unbroken horizon circling around me. What do I behold? Flowers? No, there is not a flower in sight, but one vast expanse of living verdure! From north to south, from east to west, stretches the prairie meadow, green as an emerald, and smooth as the surface of a sleeping lake!

The wind is upon its bosom, sweeping the silken blades. They are in motion; and the verdure is dappled into lighter and darker shades, as the shadows of summer clouds fleeting across the sun.

The eye wanders without resistance. Perchance, it encounters the dark hirsute forms of the buffalo, or traces the tiny outlines of the antelope. Perchance, it follows, in pleased wonder, the far-wild gallop of a snow-white steed.

This is the "grass prairie," the boundless pasture of the bison.

* * * *

The scene changes. The earth is no longer level, but treeless and verdant as ever. Its surface exhibits a succession of parallel undulations, here and there swelling into smooth round hills. It is covered with a soft turf of brilliant greenness. These undulations remind one of the ocean after a mighty storm, when the crisped foam has died upon the waves, and the big swell comes bowling in. They look as though they had once been such waves, that, by an omnipotent mandate, had been transformed to earth, and suddenly stood still!

This is the "rolling prairie."

* * * *

Again the scene changes. I am among green swards and bright flowers; but the view is broken by groves and clumps of copse-wood. The frondage is varied, its tints vivid, and its outlines soft and graceful. As I move forward, new landscapes open up continuously—views parklike and picturesque. "Gangs" of buffalo, "herds" of antelope, and "droves" of wild horses, mottle the far vistas. Turkeys run into the coppice; and pheasants whirr up from the path.

Where are the owners of these lands, of these flocks and fowls? Where are the houses—the palaces—that should appertain to these lordly parks? I look forward, expecting to see the turrets of tall mansions spring up over the groves. But no. For hundreds of miles around no chimney sends forth its smoke. Although with a culti-

vated aspect, this region is only trodden by the mocassoned foot of the hunter, and his enemy; the red Indian.

These are the "mottes"—the "islands" of the prairie sea.

* * * *

I am in the deep forest. It is night, and the log fire throws out its vermillion glare, painting the objects that surround our bivouac. Huge trunks stand thickly around us; and massive limbs, gray and giant-like, stretch out and over. I notice the bark. It is cracked, and clings in broad scales crisping outward. Long snake-like parasites creep from tree to tree—coiling the trunks, as though they were serpents, and would crush them! There are no leaves overhead. They have riped, and fallen; but the white Spanish moss, festooned along the branches, hangs weeping down like the drapery of a death-bed!

Prostrate trunks—yards in diameter, and

half-decayed—lie along the ground. Their ends exhibit vast cavities, where the porcupine and opossum have taken shelter from the cold.

My comrades—wrapped in their blankets, and stretched upon the dead leaves—have gone to sleep. They lie with their feet to the fire, and their heads resting in the hollow of their saddles. The horses standing around a tree, and tied to its lower branches, seem also to sleep. I am awake, and listening. The wind is high up, whistling among the twigs, and causing the long white streamers to oscillate. It utters a wild and melancholy music. There are few other sounds, for it is winter, and the tree-frog and cicada are silent. I hear the crackling knots in the fire—the rustling of dry leaves "swirled" up by a stray gust—the "coo-whoo-a" of the white owl—the bark of the racoon—and, at intervals, the dismal howling of wolves. These are the nocturnal voices of the *winter* forest.

They are savage sounds; yet there is a chord in my bosom that vibrates under their influence; and my spirit is tinged with romance, as I lie and listen.

* * * *

The forest, in autumn—still bearing its full frondage. The leaves resemble flowers, so bright are their hues. They are red, and yellow, and golden, and brown. The woods are warm and glorious now; and the birds flutter among the laden branches. The eye wanders delighted down long vistas, and over sunlit glades. It is caught by the flashing of gaudy plumage, the golden-green of the paroquet, the blue of the jay, and the orange wing of the oriole. The red bird flutters lower down in the coppice of green pawpaws, or amidst the amber leaflets of the beechen thicket. Hundreds of tiny wings flit through the openings, twinkling in the sun like the glancing of gems.

The air is filled with music—sweet sounds

of love. The bark of the squirrel, the cooing of mated doves, the "rat-ta-ta" of the pecker, and the constant and measured chirrup of the cicada, are all ringing together. High up, on a topmost twig, the mock bird pours forth his mimic note, as though he would shame all other songsters into silence.

* * * *

I am in a country of brown barren earth, and broken outlines. There are rocks, and clefts, and patches of sterile soil. Strange vegetable forms grow in the clefts, and hang over the rocks. Others are spheroidal in shape, resting upon the surface of the parched earth. Others rise vertically to a great height, like carved and fluted columns. Some throw out branches, crooked shaggy branches, with hirsute oval leaves. Yet there is a homogeneousness about all these vegetable forms—in their colour, in their fruit, and flowers — that proclaims

them of one family. They are cacti. It is a forest of the Mexican *nopal.* Another singular plant is here. It throws out long thorny leaves that curve downward. It is the agave, the far-famed mezcal-plant of Mexico. Here and there, mingling with the cacti, are trees of acacia and mezquite—the denizens of the desert land. No bright object relieves the eye ; no bird pours its melody into the ear. The lonely owl flaps away into the impassable thicket—the rattle-snake glides under its scanty shade—and the coyoté skulks through its silent glades.

* * * *

I have climbed mountain after mountain, and still I behold peaks soaring far above, crowned with the snow that never melts. I stand upon beetling cliffs, and look into chasms that yawn beneath, sleeping in the silence of desolation. Great fragments have fallen into them, and lie piled upon one another. Others hang threatening over,

as if waiting for some concussion of the atmosphere to hurl them from their balance. Dark precipices frown me into fear; and my head reels with a dizzy faintness. I hold to the pine tree shaft, or the angle of the firmer rock.

Above, and below, and around me, are mountains piled on mountains in chaotic confusion. Some are bald and bleak: others exhibit traces of vegetation, in the dark needles of the pine and cedar, whose stunted forms half-grow, half-hang from the cliffs. Here, a cone-shaped peak soars up till it is lost in snow and clouds. There, a ridge elevates its sharp outline against the sky; while along its sides lie huge boulders of granite, as though they had been hurled from the hands of Titan giants!

A fearful monster—the grizzly bear—drags his body along the high ridges; the carcajou squats upon the projecting rock, waiting the elk that must pass to the water

below; and the bighorn bounds from crag to crag in search of his shy mate. Along the pine branch the bald buzzard whets his filthy beak; and the war-eagle, soaring over all, cuts sharply against the blue field of the heavens!

These are the Rocky Mountains — the American Andes—the colossal vertebræ of the continent!

* * * * *

Such are the aspects of the wild west—such is the scenery of our drama.

Let us raise the curtain, and bring on the characters.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRAIRIE MERCHANTS.

"New Orleans,
"April 3rd, 18—.

"DEAR ST. VRAIN,

"Our young friend, M. Henry Haller, goes to St. Louis in 'search of the picturesque.' See that he be put through a 'regular course of sprouts.'

"Yours,
"LUIS WALTON.

"Charles St. Vrain, Esq.,
"Planter's Hotel,
"St. Louis."

"With this laconic epistle in my waistcoat pocket, I debarked at St. Louis on the 10th of April, and drove to the "Planter's."

After getting my baggage stowed, and my horse (a favourite I had brought with me) stabled, I put on a clean shirt; and, descending to the "office," inquired for M. St. Vrain.

He was not there. He had gone up the Missouri river, several days before.

This was a disappointment, as I had brought no other introduction to St. Louis. But I endeavoured to await with patience the return of M. St. Vrain. He was expected back in less than a week.

Day after day, I mounted my horse. I rode up to the "Mounds," and out upon the prairies. I lounged about the hotel; and smoked my cigar in its fine piazza. I drank "sherry cobblers" in the saloon; and read the journals in the "reading room."

With these and such like occupations, I killed time for three whole days.

There was a party of gentlemen stopping at the hotel, who seemed to know each other well. I might call them a clique; but that is not a good word, and does not express what I mean. They appeared rather, a band of friendly, jovial fellows. They strolled together through the streets, and sat side by side at the *table d'hote*, where they usually remained long after the regular diners had retired. I noticed that they drank the most expensive wines, and smoked the finest cigars the house afforded.

My attention was attracted to these men. I was struck with their peculiar bearing—their erect, Indian-like carriage in the streets, combined with a boyish gaiety, so characteristic of the western American.

They dressed nearly alike; in fine black cloth, white linen, satin vests, and diamond pins. They wore the whisker full, but

smoothly trimmed; and several of them sported moustaches. Their hair fell curling over their shoulders; and most of them wore their collars turned down, displaying healthy-looking, sun-tanned throats. I was struck with a *vraisemblance* in their physiognomy. Their faces did not resemble each other; but there was an unmistakeable similarity in the expression of the eye —no doubt, the mark that had been made by like occupations and experience.

Were they *sportsmen?* No. The sportsman's hands are whiter. There is more jewellery on his fingers; his waistcoat is of a gayer pattern; and altogether his dress will be more gaudy and super-elegant. Moreover, the sportsman lacks that air of free-and-easy confidence. He dares not assume it. He *may live* in the hotel; but he must be quiet and unobtrusive. The sportsman is a bird of prey; hence, like all birds of prey, his habits are silent and solitary. They are not of his profession.

"Who are these gentlemen?" I inquired, from a person who sat by me, indicating to him the men of whom I have spoken.

"The prairie men."

"The prairie men!"

"Yes. The Santa Fé traders."

"Traders!" I echoed, in some surprise, not being able to connect such *elegantes* with any ideas of trade or the prairies.

"Yes," continued my informant. "That large, fine-looking man, in the middle, is Bent—Bill. Bent, as he is called. The gentleman on his right is young Sublette; the other, standing on his left, is one of the Choteaus; and that is the sober Jerry Folger."

"These, then, are the celebrated prairie merchants?"

"Precisely so."

I sat, eyeing them with increased curiosity. I observed that they were looking at *me;*

and that I was the subject of their conversation.

Presently, one of them—a dashing-like young fellow—parted from the group, and walked up to me.

"Were you inquiring for Mr. St. Vrain?" he asked.

"I was."

"Charles?"

"Yes, that is the name."

"I am ——"

I pulled out my note of introduction, and handed it to the gentleman; who glanced over its contents.

"My dear friend," said he, grasping me cordially; "devilish sorry I have not been here. I came down the river this morning. How stupid of Walton not to superscribe to Bill Bent. How long have you been up?"

"Three days. I arrived on the 10th."

"By the Lord! you are lost. Come, let me make you acquainted. Here, Bent! Bill! Jerry! ——"

And, the next moment, I had shaken hands with one and all of the traders; of which fraternity, I found, that my new friend, St. Vrain, was a member.

"First gong that?" asked one, as the loud scream of a gong came through the gallery.

"Yes," replied Bent, consulting his watch. "Just time to 'licker.' Come along!"

Bent moved toward the saloon; and we all followed, *nemine dissentiente.*

The spring season was setting in; and the young mint had sprouted—a botanical fact with which my new acquaintances appeared to be familiar—as one and all of them ordered a "mint julep." This beverage, in the mixing and drinking, occupied our time until the second scream of the gong summoned us to dinner.

"Sit with us, Mr. Haller," said Bent; "I am sorry we didn't know you sooner—you have been lonely."

And so saying, he led the way into the dining-room, followed by his companions and myself.

I need not describe a dinner at the Planter's St. Louis, with its venison steaks, its buffalo tongues, its "prairie chickens," and its delicious frog "fixings" from the Illinois "bottom." No. I would not describe the dinner, and what followed, I am afraid I could not.

We sat until we had the table to ourselves. Then the cloth was removed; and we commenced smoking *regalias*, and drinking madeira at *twelve dollars a bottle!* This was ordered in by some one, not in single bottles, but by the half-dozen! I remember thus far well enough; and that, whenever I took up a wine-card or a pencil, these articles were snatched out of my fingers.

I remember listening to stories of wild adventures among the Pawnees, and the Comanches, and the Blackfeet, until I was

filled with interest, and became enthusiastic about prairie-life. Then some one asked me, would I not like to join them in "a trip?" Upon this, I made a speech; and proposed to accompany my new acquaintances on their next expedition; and then St. Vrain said I was just the man for their life; and this pleased me highly. Then some one sang a Spanish song, with a guitar, I think; and some one else danced an Indian war-dance; and then we all rose to our feet, and chorused the "Star-spangled Banner;" and I remember nothing else after this, until next morning, when I remember well that I awoke with a splitting headache.

I had hardly time to reflect on my previous night's folly, when the door opened; and St. Vrain, with half a dozen of my table companions, rushed into the room. They were followed by a waiter, who carried

several large glasses topped with ice, and filled with a pale amber-coloured liquid.

"A sherry cobbler, Mr. Haller," cried one; "best thing in the world for you—drain it my boy. It'll cool you in a squirrel's jump."

I drank off the refreshing beverage, as desired.

"Now, my dear friend," said St. Vrain, "you feel a hundred per cent. better? But tell me! were you in earnest, when you spoke of going with us across the plains? We start in a week; I shall be sorry to part with you so soon."

But I *was* in earnest. I *am* going with you, if you will only show me how I am to set about it."

"Nothing easier—buy yourself a horse.

"I have got one."

"Then a few coarse articles of dress, a rifle, a pair of pistols, a—"

"Stop, stop—I have all these things.

That is not what I would be at, but this. You, gentlemen, carry goods to Santa Fé. You double, or treble, your money on them. Now I have 10,000 dollars in a bank here. What should hinder me to combine profit with pleasure, and invest it as you?"

"Nothing—nothing! A good idea," answered several.

"Well then, if any of you will have the goodness to go with me; and show me what sort of merchandise I am to lay in for the Santa Fé market, I will pay for his wine bill at dinner; and that's no small commission, I think."

The prairie men laughed loudly, declaring they would all go a-shopping with me; and, after breakfast, we started in a body, arm-in-arm.

Before dinner I had invested nearly all my disposable funds in printed calicoes, long knives, and looking glasses; leaving just money enough to purchase mule-wagons

and hire teamsters at Independence—our point of departure for the "plains."

A few days after, with my new companions, I was steaming it up the Missouri, on our way to the trackless prairies of the "Far West."

CHAPTER III.

THE "PRAIRIE FEVER."

After a week spent in Independence, buying mules and wagons, we took the route over the plains. There were a hundred wagons in the "caravan," and nearly twice that number of teamsters and attendants. Two of the capacious vehicles contained all my "plunder;" and to manage them, I had hired a couple of lathy long-haired Missourians. I had also engaged a Canadian voyageur, named Godé, as a sort of attendant or *compagnon*.

Where are the glossy *elegantes* of the planters' hotel? One would suppose they had been left behind; as here are none but men in hunting shirts and slouch hats. Yes—but under these hats we recognise their faces, and in these rude shirts we have the same jovial fellows as ever. The silky black and the diamonds have disappeared; for now the traders flourish under the *prairie* costume. I will endeavour to give an idea of the appearance of my companions by describing my own; for I am "tricked out" very much like themselves.

I wear a hunting shirt of dressed deer skin. It is a garment more after the style of an ancient tunic, than anything I can think of. It is of a light yellow colour, beautifully stitched and embroidered; and the cape—for it has a short cape—is fringed by tags cut out of the leather itself. The skirt is also bordered by a similar fringe, and hangs full and low. A pair of "savers"

of scarlet cloth cover my limbs to the thigh; and under these are strong jeans pantaloons, heavy boots, and big brass spurs. A coloured cotton shirt, a blue neck-tie, and a broad-brimmed Guayaquil hat, complete the articles of my every day dress. Behind me, on the cantle of my saddle, may be observed a bright red object folded into a cylindrical form. That is my "Mackinaw," a great favourite—for it makes my bed by night, and my great coat on other occasions. There is a small slit in the middle of it, through which I thrust my head in cold or rainy weather; and I am thus covered to the ankles.

As I have said, my *compagnons du voyage* are similarly attired. There may be a difference of colour in the blanket or the leggings, or the shirt may be of other materials; but that I have described may be taken as a "character dress."

We are all somewhat similarly armed and equipped. For my part, I may say that I

am "armed to the teeth." In my holsters I carry a pair of Colt's large-sized revolvers, six shots each. In my belt is another pair of the small size, with five shots each. In addition, I have a light rifle, making in all twenty-three shots, which I have learnt to deliver in as many seconds of time. Failing with all these, I carry in my belt a long shining blade known as a "bowie knife." This last is my hunting knife, my dining knife, and, in short, my knife of "all work." For accoutrements I have a pouch and flask, both slung under the right arm. I have also a large gourd canteen, and a haversack for my rations. So have all my companions.

But we are differently mounted. Some ride saddle mules; others stride a mustang; while a few have brought their favourite American horses. I am of this number. I ride a dark brown stallion with black legs, and muzzle like the withered fern. He is a

half Arab, and of perfect proportions. He is called "Moro," a Spanish name, given him by the Louisiana planter from whom I bought him, but why I do not know. I have retained the name, and he answers to it readily. He is strong, fleet, and beautiful. Many of my friends fancy him on the route, and offer large prices for him; but these do not tempt me, for my Moro serves me well. Every day I grow more and more attached to him. My dog, Alp, a San Bernard that I bought from a Swiss emigré in St. Louis, hardly comes in for a tithe of my affections.

I find, in referring to my note book, that for weeks we travelled over the prairies, without any incident of unusual interest. To me the scenery was interest enough; and I do not remember a more striking picture than to see the long caravan of wagons—the "prairie ships"—deployed over the plain, or crawling slowly up some gentle slope—

their white tilts contrasting beautifully with the deep green of the earth. At night too, the camp, with its *corralled* wagons, and horses picketed around, was equally a picture. The scenery was altogether new to me, and imbued me with impressions of a peculiar character. The streams were fringed with tall groves of cottonwood trees, whose column-like stems supported a thick frondage of silvery leaves. These groves, meeting at different points, walled in the view, so dividing the prairies from one another, that we seemed to travel through vast fields fenced by colossal hedges!

We crossed many rivers, fording some, and floating our wagons over others that were deeper and wider. Occasionally we saw deer, and antelope; and our hunters shot a few of these; but we had not yet reached the range of the buffalo. Once we stopped a day to recruit in a wooded "bottom," where the grass was plenty, and the water

pure. Now and then too, we were halted to mend a broken tongue or an axle, or help a "stalled" wagon from its miry bed.

I had very little trouble with my particular division of the caravan. My Missourians turned out to be a pair of staunch hands, who could assist one another, without making a desperate affair of every slight accident.

The grass had sprung up, and our mules and oxen, instead of thinning down, every day grew fatter upon it. Moro, therefore, came in for a better share of the maize that I had brought in my wagons, and which kept my favourite in fine travelling condition.

As we approached the Arkansas, we saw mounted Indians disappearing over the swells. They were Pawnees; and for several days clouds of these dusky warriors hung upon the skirts of the caravan. But they knew our strength, and kept at a wary distance from our long rifles.

To me every day brought something new, either in the incidents of the "voyage," or the features of the landscape.

Godé—who had been by turns a *voyageur*, a hunter, a trapper, and a *coureur du bois*—in our private dialogues, had given me an insight into many an item of prairie-craft, thus enabling me to cut quite a respectable figure among my new comrades. St. Vrain too—whose frank, generous manner had already won my confidence—spared no pains to make the trip agreeable to me. What with the wild gallops by day, and the wilder tales by the night watch-fires, I became intoxicated with the romance of my new life. *I had caught the "prairie fever!"*

So my companions told me, laughing! I did not understand them then. I knew what they meant afterwards. The prairie fever! Yes. I was just then in process of being innoculated by that strange disease. It grew upon me apace. The dreams of home

began to die within me; and, with these, the illusory ideas of many a young and foolish ambition. Died away, too—dead out of my heart—the allurements of the great city—the memory of soft eyes and silken tresses—the impress of amorous emotions—foes to human happiness—all died away, as if they had never been, or I had never felt them!

My strength increased, both physically and intellectually. I experienced a buoyancy of spirits and a vigour of body, I had never known before. I felt a pleasure in action. My blood seemed to rush warmer and swifter through my veins; and I fancied that my eyes reached to a more distant vision. I could look boldly upon the sun, without quivering in my glance.

Had I imbibed a portion of the divine essence, that lives and moves, and has its being in those vast solitudes?

Who can answer this?

'The prairie fever! I feel it now! Whilst I am penning these memories, my fingers twitch to grasp the reins—my knees quiver to press the sides of my noble horse, and wildly wander over the verdant billows of the prairie sea!

CHAPTER IV.

A RIDE UPON A BUFFALO BULL.

We had been out about two weeks, when we struck the Arkansas "Bend," about six miles below the "Plum Buttes." Here our wagons corralled and camped.

So far we had seen but little of the buffalo: only a stray bull; or at most two or three together; and these shy. It was now the "running season," but none of the great droves—love maddened—had crossed us.

"Yonder!" cried St. Vrain, "fresh hump for supper!"

We looked north-west, as indicated by our friend. Along the escarpment of a low table, five dark objects broke the line of the horizon. A glance was enough—they were buffaloes.

As St. Vrain spoke, we were about slipping off our saddles. Back went the girth buckles with a "sneck"—down came the stirrups,—up went we, and off in the "twinkling of a goat's eye."

Half a score or so started—some, like myself, for the sport—while others—old hunters—had the "meat" in their eye.

We had made but a short day's march; our horses were still fresh; and, in three times as many minutes, the three miles that lay between us and the game were reduced to one. Here however we were "winded." Some of the party, like myself green upon the prairies, disregarding advice, had ridden straight a-head; and the bulls snuffed us on the wind. When within a mile, one of them threw up his shaggy front, snorted,

struck the ground with his hoof, rolled over, rose up again, and dashed off at full speed, followed by his four companions.

It remained to us now either to abandon the chase, or put our horses to their mettle, and "catch up." The latter course was adopted; and we galloped forward. All at once we found ourselves riding up to, what appeared to be, a clay wall six feet high. It was a stair between two tables; and ran right and left, as far as the eye could reach, without the semblance of a gap!

This was an obstacle that caused us to rein up, and reflect. Some wheeled their horses, and commenced riding back; while half-a-dozen of us, better mounted—among whom were St. Vrain, and my voyageur Godé—not wishing to give up the chase so easily, put to the spur, and cleared the scarp.

From this point it cost us a five miles' gallop, and our horses a white sweat, to

come up with the hindmost—a young cow—who fell, bored by a bullet from every rifle in the party.

As the others had gained some distance a-head, and we had meat enough for all, we reined up; and dismounting, set about "removing the hair." This operation was a short one under the skilful knives of the hunters. We had now leisure to look back, and calculate the distance we had ridden from camp.

"Eight miles, every inch!" cried one.

"We're close to the trail," said St. Vrain, pointing to some old wagon tracks that marked the route of the Santa Fé traders.

"Well?"

"If we ride into camp, we shall have to ride back in the morning. It will be sixteen extra miles for our cattle."

"True."

"Let us stay here then. Here's water and grass. There's buffalo meat; and yonder's

a wagon load of "chips." We have our blankets—what more do we want?"

"I say camp where we are?"

"And I."

"And I."

In a minute, the girth buckles flew open, our saddles were lifted off, and our panting horses were cropping the curly bunches of the prairie grass, within the circles of their *cabriestoes*.

A crystal rivulet—the "arroyo" of the Spaniards—stole away southward to the Arkansas. On the bank of this rivulet, and under one of its bluffs, we chose a spot for our bivouack. The *bois de vache* was collected—a fire was kindled—and "hump steaks" spitted on sticks, were soon spluttering in the blaze. Luckily St. Vrain and I had our flasks along; and as each of them contained a pint of pure Cognac, we managed to make a tolerable supper. The old hunters had their pipes and tobacco; my

friend and I our cigars; and we sat round the ashes to a late hour, smoking, and listening to wild tales of mountain adventure.

At length the watch was told off—the lariats were shortened—the picket-pins driven home—and my comrades, rolling themselves up in their blankets, rested their heads in the hollow of their saddles, and went to sleep.

There was a man named Hibbets in our party, who from his habits of somnolency, had earned the sobriquet of "Sleepyhead." For this reason, the first watch had been assigned to him, being the least dangerous—as Indians seldom make their attacks until the hour of soundest sleep, that before daybreak.

Hibbets had climbed to his post—the top of the bluff—where he could command a view of the surrounding prairie.

Before night had set in, I had noticed a very beautiful spot on the bank of the

arroyo, about two hundred yards from where my comrades lay. A sudden fancy came into my head to sleep there; and taking up my rifle, robe, and blanket—at the same time calling to "Sleepyhead" to wake me in case of alarm—I proceeded thither.

The ground, shelving gradually down to the arroyo, was covered with soft buffalo grass—thick and dry—as good a bed as was ever pressed by sleepy mortal. On this I spread my robe; and, folding my blanket, around me, lay down—cigar in mouth—to smoke myself asleep.

It was a lovely moonlight—so clear that I could easily distinguish the colours of the prairie flowers—the silver euphorbias—the golden sunflowers, and the scarlet malvas—that fringed the banks of the arroyo at my feet. There was an enchanting stillness in the air, broken only by an occasional whine from the prairie wolf, the distant snoring of my companions, and the "crop-crop" of our horses, shortening the crisp grass.

I lay a good while awake, until my cigar burnt up to my lips—we smoke them close on the prairies—then, spitting out the stump, I turned over on my side, and was soon in the land of dreams.

I could not have been asleep many minutes, when I felt sensible of a strange noise, like distant thunder, or the roaring of a water-fall. The ground seemed to tremble beneath me!

"We are going to have a dash of a thunder-shower," thought I, still half dreaming, half sensible to impressions from without; and I drew the folds of my blanket closer about me, and again slept.

I was awakened by a noise like thunder indeed—like the trampling of a thousand hoofs, and the lowing of a thousand oxen! The earth echoed, and trembled. I could hear the shouts of my comrades—the voices of St. Vrain and Godé, the latter calling out—

"*Sacr-r-ré! Monsieur; garde les buffles!*"

I saw that they had drawn the horses; and were hurrying them under the bluff.

I sprang to my feet, flinging aside my blanket. A fearful spectacle was before me. Away to the west, as far as the eye could reach, the prairie seemed in motion. Black waves rolled over its undulating outlines, as though some burning mountain was pouring down its lava upon the plains. A thousand bright spots flashed and flitted along the moving surface like jets of fire. The ground shook—men shouted—horses reared upon their ropes, neighing wildly. My dog barked and howled, running around me!

For a moment I thought I was dreaming; but no the scene was too real to be mistaken for a vision. I saw the border of the black wave within ten paces of me, and still approaching! Then, and not till then, did I recognise the shaggy crests and glaring eyeballs of the buffalo!

"God of heaven! I am in their track. I will be trampled to death!"

It was too late to attempt an escape by running. I seized my rifle, and fired at the foremost of the band. The effect of my shot was not perceptible. The water of the arroyo was dashed in my face. A huge bull, ahead of the rest—furious and snorting—plunged through the stream, and up the slope. I was lifted and tossed high into the air. I was thrown rearwards, and fell upon a moving mass. I did not feel hurt nor stunned. I felt myself carried onward upon the backs of several animals, that, in the dense drove, ran close together. These, frightened at their strange burden, bellowed loudly, and dashed on to the front. A sudden thought struck me; and, fixing on that which was most under me, I dropped my legs astride of him, embracing his hump, and clutching the long woolly hair that grew upon his neck. The animal "routed" with

extreme terror; and plunging forward, soon *headed the band!*

This was exactly what I wanted; and on we went over the prairie—the bull running at top speed—believing, no doubt, that he had a panther or a catamount between his shoulders!

I had no desire to disabuse him of this belief; and—lest he should deem me altogether harmless, and come to a halt—I slipped out my bowie—which happened to be "handy"—and pricked him up, whenever he showed symptoms of lagging. At every fresh touch of the "spur," he roared out, and ran forward at a redoubled pace.

My danger was still extreme. The drove was coming on behind with a front of nearly a mile! I could not have cleared it, had the bull stopped, and left me on the prairie.

Notwithstanding the peril I was in, I could not resist laughing at my ludicrous situation. I felt, as one does, when looking at a good comedy.

We struck through a village of "prairie dogs." Here I fancied the animal was about to turn and run back. This brought my mirth to a sudden pause; but the buffalo usually runs in a "bee line," and fortunately mine made no exception to the law. On he went, sinking to the knees, kicking the dust from the conical hills; snorting and bellowing with rage and terror.

The "Plum buttes" were directly in the line of our course. I had seen this from the start; and knew that if I could reach them, I would be safe. They were nearly three miles from the bluff where we had bivouacked; but, in my ride, I fancied them ten!

A small one rose over the prairie, several hundred yards nearer than the main heights. Towards this I pricked the foaming bull in a last stretch; and he brought me cleverly within a hundred yards of its base.

It was now time to take leave of my dusky companion. I could have slaughtered him,

as I leaned over his back. My knife rested upon the most vulnerable part of his huge body. No! I would not have slain that buffalo for the Koh-i-noor.

Untwisting my fingers from his thick fleece, I slipped down over his tail, and, without as much as saying "Good night," ran with all my speed towards the knoll. I climbed up; and, sitting down upon a loose boulder of rock, looked out over the prairie.

The moon was still shining brightly. My late companion had halted—not far from where I had left him—and stood glaring back, with a look of extreme bewilderment! There was something so comical in the sight, that I yelled with laughter, as I sat securely on my perch.

I looked to the south-west. As far as the eye could see, the prairie was black and moving. The living wave came rolling onward and toward me; but I could now observe it in safety. The myriads of glancing

eyes, sparkling like phosphoric gleams, no longer flashed terror.

The drove was still half a mile distant. I thought I saw quick gleams, and heard the report of fire-arms away over its left border; but I could not be certain. I had begun to think of the fate of my comrades; and this gave me hopes that they were safe.

The buffaloes approached the butte on which I was seated; and, perceiving the obstacle, suddenly forked into two great belts, and swept right and left around it. What struck me at this moment as curious was, that *my* bull—my particular bull—instead of waiting till his comrades had come up, and falling in among the foremost—suddenly tossed up his head, and galloped off, as if a pack of wolves had been after him! He ran towards the outside of the band. When he had reached a point that placed him fairly beyond the flank, I could see him closing in, and moving on with the rest.

This strange tactic of my late companion puzzled me at the time, but I afterwards learned that it was sound strategy on his part. Had he remained where I had parted with him, the foremost bulls coming up would have mistaken him for an individual of some other tribe, and would certainly have gored him to death!

I sat upon the rock for nearly two hours, silently watching the sable stream as it poured past. I was on an island in the midst of a black and glittering sea. At one time I fancied I was moving, that the butte was sailing onward, and the buffaloes were standing still! My head swam with dizziness, and I leaped to my feet to drive away the strange illusion.

The torrent rolled onward; and at length the hindmost went straggling past. I descended from the knoll; and commenced groping my way over the black, trodden earth. What was lately a green sward, now

presented the aspect of ground freshly ploughed, and trampled by droves of oxen!

A number of white animals, resembling a flock of sheep, passed near me. They were wolves hanging upon the skirts of the herd.

I spurred on, keeping to the southward. At length I heard voices; and, in the clear moonlight, could see several horsemen galloping in circles over the plain. I shouted "Halloa!" A voice answered mine; and one of the horsemen came galloping up; it was St. Vrain.

"Why, Lord bless me, Haller!" cried he, reining up, and bending from his saddle to get a better view of me, "is it you or your ghost? As I sit here, it's the man himself, and alive!"

"Never in better condition," I replied.

"But where did you come from? the clouds? the sky? Where?" And his question was echoed by the others, who at this moment were shaking me by the hand, as

if they had not seen me for a twelvemonth!

Godé seemed to be the most perplexed man of the party.

"*Mon Dieu!* run over—tramp by von million dam buffles, et pas mort! Cr-r-ré matin!"

"We were hunting for your body, or rather the fragments of it," said St. Vrain. "We had searched every foot of the prairie for a mile round; and had almost come to the conclusion that the fierce brutes had eaten you up."

"Eat monsieur up! No! tre million buffles no him eat. Mon Dieu! Ha Sleep-head, pe dam!"

This exclamation of the Canadian was addressed to Hibbets, who had failed to warn my comrades of where I lay, and thus placed me in such a dangerous predicament.

"We saw you tossed in the air," continued St. Vrain, "and fall right into the thick of them. Then, of course, we gave you up.

But how, in God's name, have you got clear ?"

I related my adventure to my wondering comrades.

"*Par Dieu,*" cried Godé, "*un garçon tre bizarre—une aventure tre merveilleuse!*"

From that hour I was looked upon as a "Captain" on the prairies.

My comrades had made good work of it, as a dozen dark objects that lay upon the plain testified. They had found my rifle and blankets—the latter trodden into the earth.

St. Vrain had still a few drops in his flask; and after swallowing these, and again placing the guard, we returned to our prairie couches, and slept out the night.

CHAPTER V.

IN A BAD "FIX."

A FEW days afterwards, another "adventure" befel me; and I began to think that I was destined to become a hero among the "mountain men."

A small party of the traders—myself among the number—had pushed forward a-head of the caravan. Our object was to arrive at Santa Fé, a day or two before the wagons, in order to have everything arranged with the governor for their entrance into that capital. We took the route by the Cimmaron.

Our road, for a hundred miles or so, lay through a barren desert, without game, and almost without water. The buffalo had already disappeared, and deer were equally scarce. We had to content ourselves on the dried meat which we had brought from the settlements. We were in the deserts of the *Artemisia*. Now and then we could see a stray antelope bounding away before us, but keeping far out of range. They too seemed to be unusually shy.

On the third day after leaving the caravan, as we were riding near the Cimmaron, I thought I observed a pronged head disappearing behind a swell in the prairie. My companions were sceptical, and would none of them go with me; so, wheeling out of the trail, I started alone. One of the men—for Godé was behind—kept charge of my dog, as I did not choose to take him with me, lest he might alarm the antelopes. My horse was fresh and willing; and whether

successful or not, I knew that I could easily overtake the party by camping time.

I struck directly towards the spot where I had seen the object. It appeared to be only half a mile or so from the trail. It proved more distant—a common illusion in the crystal atmosphere of these upland regions.

A curiously-formed ridge—a *couteau des prairies*, on a small scale—traversed the plain from east to west. A thicket of cactus covered part of its summit. Towards this thicket I directed myself.

I dismounted at the bottom of the slope, and leading my horse silently up among the cacti plants, tied him to one of their branches. I then crept cautiously through the thorny leaves, towards the point where I fancied I had seen the game. To my joy, not one antelope, but a brace of those beautiful animals, was quietly grazing beyond; but alas! too far off for the carry of my rifle.

They were fully three hundred yards distant, upon a smooth, grassy slope. There was not even a sage bush to cover me, should I attempt to "approach" them. What was to be done?

I lay for several minutes, thinking over the different tricks known in hunter-craft for taking the antelope. Should I imitate their call? Should I hoist my handkerchief, and try to lure them up? I saw that they were too shy; for, at short intervals, they threw up their graceful heads, and looked inquiringly around them. I remembered the red blanket on my saddle. I could display this upon the cactus bushes—perhaps it would attract them.

I had no alternative; and was turning to go back for the blanket; when, all at once, my eye rested upon a clay-coloured line running across the prairie, beyond where the animals were feeding. It was a break in the surface of the plain—a buffalo road—

or the channel of an *arroyo*—in either case the very cover I wanted—for the animals were not a hundred yards from it; and were getting still nearer to it as they fed.

Creeping back out of the thicket, I ran along the side of the slope toward a point, where I had noticed that the ridge was depressed to the prairie level. Here, to my surprise, I found myself on the banks of a broad arroyo, whose water—clear and shallow—ran slowly over a bed of sand and gypsum.

The banks were low—not over three feet above the surface of the water—except where the ridge impinged upon the stream. Here there was a high bluff; and, hurrying around its base, I entered the channel; and commenced wading upward.

As I had anticipated, I soon came to a bend, where the stream, after running parallel to the ridge, swept round and *cañoned* through it. At this place I stopped; and

looked cautiously over the bank. The antelopes had approached within less than rifle range of the arroyo; but they were yet far above my position. They were still quietly feeding and unconscious of danger. I again bent down, and waded on.

It was a difficult task proceeding in this way. The bed of the creek was soft and yielding, and I was compelled to tread slowly and silently, lest I should alarm the game; but I was cheered in my exertions by the prospect of fresh venison for my supper.

After a weary drag of several hundred yards, I came opposite to a small clump of wormwood bushes, growing out of the bank. "I may be high enough," thought I, "these will serve for cover."

I raised my body gradually, until I could see through the leaves. I was in the right spot.

I brought my rifle to a level; sighted for

the heart of the buck; and fired. The animal leaped from the ground; and fell back lifeless.

I was about to rush forward, and secure my prize, when I observed the doe—instead of running off as I had expected—go up to her fallen partner, and press her tapering nose to his body. She was not more than twenty yards from me; and I could plainly see that her look was one of inquiry, and bewilderment! All at once, she seemed to comprehend the fatal truth; and throwing back her head; commenced uttering the most piteous cries—at the same time running in circles around the body!

I stood wavering between two minds. My first impulse had been to reload, and kill the doe; but her plaintive voice entered my heart, disarming me of all hostile intentions. Had I dreamt of witnessing this painful spectacle, I should not have left the trail.

But the mischief was now done. "I have worse than killed her," thought I, "it will be better to despatch her at once."

Actuated by these principles of a common, but to her fatal, humanity, I rested the butt of my rifle, and reloaded. With a faltering hand, I again levelled the piece, and fired.

My nerves were steady enough to do the work. When the smoke floated aside, I could see the little creature bleeding upon the grass—her head resting against the body of her murdered mate!

I shouldered my rifle; and was about to move forward, when, to my astonishment, I found that I was caught by the feet! I was held firmly, as if my legs had been screwed in a vice!

I made an effort to extricate myself—another, more violent, and equally unsuccessful—and, with a third, I lost my balance, and fell back upon the water!

Half suffocated, I regained my upright position; but only to find that I was held as fast as ever!

Again I struggled to free my limbs. I could neither move them backward nor forward—to the right nor the left; and I became sensible that I was gradually going down. Then the fearful truth flashed upon me,—*I was sinking in a quicksand!*

A feeling of horror came over me. I renewed my efforts with the energy of desperation. I leant to one side, then to the other, almost wrenching my knees from their sockets. My feet remained fast as ever. I could not move them an inch!

The soft clingy sand already overtopped my horse-skin boots, wedging them around my ankles, so that I was unable to draw them off; and I could feel that I was still sinking, slowly but surely, as though some subterraneous monster were leisurely dragging me down! This very thought caused me a fresh thrill of horror; and I called

aloud for help! To whom ? There was no one within miles of me—no living thing. Yes! the neigh of my horse answered me from the hill, mocking my despair!

I bent forward, as well as my constrained position would permit; and, with frenzied fingers, commenced tearing up the sand. I could barely reach the surface; and the little hollow, I was able to make, filled up almost as soon as it had been formed !

A thought occurred to me. My rifle might support me, placed horizontally. I looked around for it. It was not to be seen. It had sunk beneath the sand !

Could I throw my body flat, and prevent myself from sinking deeper ? No. The water was two feet in depth. I should drown at once !

This last hope left me as soon as formed. I could think of no plan to save myself. I could make no further effort. A strange stupor seized upon me. My very thoughts

became paralysed. I knew that I was going mad. For a moment *I was mad!*

After an interval, my senses returned. I made an effort to rouse my mind from its paralysis, in order that I might meet death—which I now believed to be certain—as a man should.

I stood erect. My eyes had sunk to the prairie level, and rested upon the still bleeding victims of my cruelty. My heart smote me at the sight. Was I suffering a retribution of God?

With humbled and penitent thoughts, I turned my face to heaven, almost dreading that some sign of omnipotent anger would scowl upon me from above. But no. The sun was shining as bright as ever; and the blue canopy of the world was without a cloud.

I gazed upward, and prayed, with an earnestness known only to the hearts of men in positions of peril like mine.

As I continued to look up, an object attracted my attention. Against the sky, I distinguished the outlines of a large dark bird. I knew it to be the obscene bird of the plains—the buzzard vulture. Whence had it come? Who knows? Far beyond the reach of human eye, it had seen, or scented, the slaughtered antelopes; and, on broad silent wing, was now descending to the feast of death.

Presently another, and another, and many others, mottled the blue field of the heavens, curving and wheeling silently earthward. Then, the foremost swooped down upon the bank; and, after gazing around for a moment, flapped off towards its prey.

In a few seconds the prairie was black with filthy birds, who clambered over the dead antelopes; and beat their wings against each other, while they tore out the eyes of the quarry with their fetid beaks.

And now came gaunt wolves — sneaking and hungry — stealing out of the cactus thicket; and loping, coward-like, over the green swells of the prairie. These, after a battle, drove away the vultures; and tore up the prey — all the while growling and snapping vengefully at each other.

"Thank heaven! I shall at least be saved from this!"

I was soon relieved from the sight. My eyes had sunk below the level of the bank. I had looked my last on the fair green earth. I could now see only the clayey walls that contained the river, and the water that ran unheeding past me.

Once more I fixed my gaze upon the sky; and, with prayerful heart, endeavoured to resign myself to my fate.

In spite of my endeavours to be calm, the memories of earthly pleasures, and friends, and home, came over me—causing me, at

intervals, to break into wild paroxysms, and make fresh though fruitless struggles.

Again I was attracted by the neighing of my horse.

A thought entered my mind, filling me with fresh hopes. "Perhaps my horse——"

I lost not a moment. I raised my voice to its highest pitch; and called the animal by name. I knew that he would come at my call. I had tied him but slightly. The cactus limb would snap off. I called again, repeating words that were well known to him. I listened with a bounding heart. For a moment there was silence. Then I heard the quick sounds of his hoof, as though the animal was rearing and struggling to free himself. Then I could distinguish the stroke of his heels, in a measured and regular gallop!

Nearer came the sounds—nearer and clearer, until the gallant brute bounded out on the bank above me. There he halted, and flinging back his tossed mane, uttered

a shrill neigh. He was bewildered, and looked upon every side, snorting loudly!

I knew that, having once seen me, he would not stop until he had pressed his nose against my cheek—for this was his usual custom. Holding out my hands, I again uttered the magic words.

Now looking downward he perceived me; and, stretching himself, sprang out into the channel. The next moment I held him by the bridle!

There was no time to be lost. I was still going down; and my armpits were fast nearing the surface of the quicksand.

I caught the lariat; and, passing it under the saddle-girths fastened it in a tight firm knot. I then looped the trailing end, making it secure around my body. I had left enough of the rope, between the bit ring and the girths, to enable me to check and guide the animal—in case the drag upon my body should be too painful.

All this while the dumb brute seemed to comprehend what I was about. He knew too the nature of the ground on which he stood; for, during the operation, he kept lifting his feet alternately to prevent himself from sinking!

My arrangements were at length completed; and, with a feeling of terrible anxiety, I gave my horse the signal to move forward. Instead of going off with a start, the intelligent animal stepped away slowly, as though he understood my situation! The lariat tightened—I felt my body moving, and, the next moment, experienced a wild delight—a feeling I cannot describe—as I found myself dragged out of the sand!

I sprang to my feet with a shout of joy. I rushed up to my steed; and, throwing my arms around his neck, kissed him with as much delight as I would have kissed a beautiful girl. He answered my embrace with

a low whimper, that told me I was understood!

I looked for my rifle. Fortunately it had not sunk deeply, and I soon found it. My boots were behind me, but I stayed not to look for them—being smitten with a wholesome dread of the place where I had left them.

I was not long in retreating from the arroyo; and, mounting, I galloped back to the trail.

It was sundown, before I reached camp; where I was met by the inquiries of my wondering companions. "Did you come across the 'goats?'" "Where's your boots?" "Whether have you been hunting or fishing?"

I answered all these questions, by relating my adventures; and, for that night, I was again the hero of the camp fire.

CHAPTER VI.

SANTA FÉ.

After a week's climbing through the Rocky Mountains, we descended into the Valley of the Del Norté; and arrived at the capital of New Mexico — the far-famed Santa Fé. Next day the caravan itself came in—for we had lost time on the southern route; and the wagons, travelling by the Raton Pass, had made a good journey of it.

We had no difficulty about their entrance into the country, with the proviso that we paid five hundred dollars of *Alcavala*

tax, upon each wagon. This was a greater extortion than usual; but the traders were compelled to accept the impost.

Santa Fé is the entrepôt of the province, and the chief seat of its trade. On reaching it, we halted, "camping" without the walls.

St. Vrain, several other *proprietaires*, and myself, took up our quarters at the Fonda; where we endeavoured—by means of the sparkling vintage of El Paso—to make ourselves oblivious of the hardships we had endured in the passage of the plains.

The night of our arrival was given to feasting and making merry.

Next morning I was awakened by the voice of my man Godé—who appeared to be in high spirits—singing a snatch of a Canadian boat song.

"Ah, monsieur!" cried he, seeing me awake, "to-night—adjourdhui—une grand fonction—one bal—vat le dam Mexicaine he call fandango. Tre bien, monsieur. You

vill sure have grand plaisir to see un fandango Mexicaine?"

"Not I, Godé; my countrymen are not so fond of dancing as yours."

"C'est vrai, Monsieur; but von fandango is tres curieux. You sall see ver many sort of de pas. Bolero, et valse, wis de Coona, and ver many more pas, all mix up in von puchero. Allons! monsieur, you vill see ver many pretty girl, avec les yeux tre noir, and ver short—ah, pe Gar! yer short—vat you call em in Americaine?"

"I do not know what you allude to."

"Cela! Zis, Monsieur," holding out the skirt of his hunting shirt, "Par Dieu! now I have him—petticoes, ver short petticoes. Ah, pe Gar! you sall see vat you sall see en un fandang Mexicaine."

"Las niñas de Durango
Conmigo bailandas,
Al cielo saltandas,
En el fandango—en el fan-dang—o."

"Ha! here come Monsieur St. Vrain. Ecoutez! He nevare not go to fandango. Sacre! how Monsieur dance! like un maitre de ballet. Mais he be de sangre—blood Français. Ecoutez!"

"Al cielo saltandas.
En el fandango—en el fan-dang—"

"Ha! Godé!"

"Monsieur?"

"Trot over to the *Cantina*, and beg, borrow, buy, or steal a bottle of the best Paso."

"Sall I try steal 'im, Monsieur St. Vrain?" inquired Godé, with a knowing grin.

"No, you old Canadian thief! pay for it. There's the money. Best Paso, do you hear? cool and sparkling. Now, Vaya! Bon jour, my bold rider of buffalo bulls! Still abed, I see."

"My head aches as if it would split."

"Ha, ha, ha! so does mine; but Godé's gone for medicine. Hair of the dog good for the bite; come, jump up!"

"Wait till I get a dose of your medicine."

"True; you'll feel better then. I say—city life don't agree with us, eh?"

"You call this a city, do you?"

"Ay, so it is styled in these parts—*la ciudad de Santa Fé*—the famous city of Santa Fé—the capital of Nuevo Mexico—the metropolis of all prairiedom—the paradise of traders, trappers, and thieves!"

"And this is the progress of 300 years! Why these people have hardly passed the first stages of civilization?"

"Rather say they are passing the last stages of it. Here in this far oasis, you will find painting, poetry, dancing, theatres, and music—fetes and fireworks, with all the little amorous arts that characterize a nation's decline. You will meet with numerous Don Quixotes—*soi disant* knights errant—Romeos without the heart, and ruffians without the courage. You will meet with

many things, before you encounter either virtue or honesty. Hola! muchacho!"

"Que es, Señor?"

"Hay café?"

"Si, Señor."

"Bring us a couple of tazas then—dos tazas, do you hear? and quick—*aprisa! aprisa!*"

"Si, Señor."

"Ha! here comes le voyageur Canadienne. So, old Nor-west! you've brought the wine?

"Vin delicieuse, Monsieur St. Vrain! equal to ze vintage Français."

"He is right, Haller—Tsap—tsap—delicious you *may* say, good Godé. Tsap—tsap. Come drink! It'll make you feel as strong as a buffalo. See! it seethes like a soda spring! like *Fontaine-que-bouille*—eh, Godé?"

"Oui, Monsieur; ver like Fontaine-que-bouille. Pe Gar, oui."

"Drink, man, drink! don't fear it—it's the

pure juice. Smell the flavour—taste the bouquet. Lord! what wine the Yankees will one day squeeze out of these New Mexican grapes!"

"Why? do you think the Yankees have an eye to this quarter?"

"Think! I know it; and why not. What use are these minikins in creation? Only to cumber the earth. Well, mozo? you have brought the coffee?"

"Ya esta, Señor."

"Here! try some of this—it will help to set you on your feet. They *can* make coffee, and no mistake. It takes a Spaniard to do that."

"What is this fandango, Godé has been telling me about?"

"Ah! true. We are to have a famous one to-night. You'll go of course?"

"Out of curiosity."

"Very well—you will have your curiosity gratified. The blustering old grampus of a

governor is to honour the ball with his presence; and it is said his pretty señora; that I don't believe."

"Why not?"

"He's too much afraid lest one of these wild Americanos may whip her off on the cantle of his saddle. Such things have been done, in this very valley. By St. Mary! she *is* good looking," continued St. Vrain, in a half soliloquy, "and I knew a man—the cursed old tyrant! only think of it!"

"Of what?"

"The way he has bled us. Five hundred dollars a wagon, and a hundred of them at that—in all 50,000 dollars!"

"But will he pocket all this? will not the government——?"

"Government! no, every cent of it. He is the government here; and, with the help of this instalment, he will rule these miserable wretches with an iron rod. Poor devils!"

"And yet they hate him, do they not?"

"Him and his. God knows they have reason."

"It is strange they do not rebel?"

"They have at times; but what can the poor devils do? Like all true tyrants, he has divided them; and makes them spend their heart's hatred on one another."

"But he seems not to have a very large army; no body-guard—"

"Body-guard!" cried St. Vrain, interrupting me, "look out! there's his body-guard!"

"*Indios bravos! les Navajoes!*" exclaimed Godé, at the same instant.

I looked forth into the street. Half-a-dozen tall savages, wrapped in striped *serapés*, were passing. Their wild hungry looks, and slow proud walk at once distinguished them from the *Indios manzos*—the water-drawing, wood-hewing Pueblos.

"Are they Navajoes?" I asked.

"Oui, Monsieur! oui!" replied Godé, apparently with some excitement. "Sacré Dieu! Navajoes—tre dam Navajoes!"

"There's no mistaking *them*," added St. Vrain.

"But the Navajoes are the notorious enemies of the New Mexicans! How come they to be here?—Prisoners?"

"Do they look like prisoners?"

They certainly showed no signs of captivity in either look or gesture. They strode proudly up the street—occasionally glancing at the passers, with an air of savage and lordly contempt.

"Why then are they here? Their country lies far to the west?"

"That is one of the secrets of Nuevo Mexico, about which I will enlighten you some other time. They are now protected by a treaty of peace,—which is only binding upon *them*, so long as it may suit their convenience to recognise it. At present, they are as free

here as you or I,—indeed, more so, when it comes to that. I wouldn't wonder if we were to meet them at the fandango to-night."

"I have heard that the Navajoes are cannibals?"

"It is true. Look at them this minute! See how they gloat upon that chubby little fellow, who seems instinctively to fear them. Lucky for the urchin it's broad daylight; or he might get chucked under one of those striped blankets."

"Are you in earnest, St. Vrain?"

By my word, I am not jesting. If I mistake not, Godé's experience will confirm what I have said. Eh, voyageur?"

"C'est vrai, Monsieur. I vas prisioniere in le nation—not Navagh, but le dam Apaché—moch the same—pour tree mons. I have les sauvages seen manger—eat—one—deux—tree—tree enfants rôtis, like hump rib of de buffle. C'est vrai, Messieurs, c'est vrai."

"It is quite true,—both Apachés and Navajoes carry off children from the valley, here, in their grand forays; and it is said, by those who should know, that most of them are used in that way. Whether as a sacrifice to the fiery god Quetzalcoatl, or whether from a fondness for human flesh, no one has yet been able to determine. In fact, with all their propinquity to this place, there is little known about them. Few, who have visited their towns, have had Godé's luck to get away again. No man of these parts ever ventures across the western Sierras."

"And how came you, Monsieur Godé, to save your scalp?"

"Pourquoi, Monsieur, je'n'ai pas. I not haves scalp-lock—vat de trappare Yankee call 'har,' mon scalp-lock is fabrique of von barbiere de Saint Luis. Voila! Monsieur."

So saying, the Canadian lifted his cap; and along with it, what I had, up to this time, looked upon as a beautiful curling

head of hair; but which now proved to be only a wig!

"Now, Messieurs!" cried he, in good humour; "how les sauvages my scalp take? Le dam Indienne no have cash-hold. Sacr-r-r-e!"

St. Vrain and I were unable to restrain our laughter at the altered and comical appearance of the Canadian.

"Come Godé! the least you can do after that, is to take a drink. Here, help yourself!"

"Tre oblige, Monsieur St. Vrain. Je vous remerci." And the ever-thirsty voyageur quaffed off the nectar of El Paso, like so much fresh milk.

"Come Haller! We must to the wagons. Business first,—then pleasure, such as we may find here among these brick stacks. But we'll have some fun in Chihuahua."

"And you think we shall go there?"

"Certainly. They do not want the fourth part of our stuff here. We must carry it on to the head market. To the camp! Allons!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FANDANGO.

In the evening I sat in my room waiting for St. Vrain. His voice reached me from wihout— ..

"Las niñas de Durango,
Conmigo bailandas,
Al cielo, —— Ha !

Are you ready, my bold rider?"

"Not quite. Sit down a minute, and wait."

"Hurry then—the dancing's begun. I have just come that way. What! that your ball dress? Ha-ha-ha!" screamed St. Vrain—seeing me unpack a blue coat, and a pair of

dark pantaloons in a tolerable state of preservation.

"Why, yes," replied I, looking up, "what fault do you find?—but is that *your* ball dress?"

No change had taken place in the ordinary raiment of my friend. The fringed hunting shirt and leggings, the belt, the bowie, and the pistols were all before me!

"Yes, my dandy; this *is* my ball dress—it aint any thing shorter; and if you'll take my advice, you'll wear what you have got on your back. How will your long-tailed blue look, with a broad belt and bowie strapped round the skirts? Ha-ha-ha!"

"But why take either belt or bowie? you are surely not going into a ball-room with your pistols in that fashion?"

"And how else should I carry them? In my hands?"

"Leave them here."

"Ha! ha! that would be a green trick. No, no. Once bit, twice shy. You don't

catch this coon going into any fandango in Santa Fé, without his six-shooters. · Come! keep on that shirt—let your leggins sweat where they are; and buckle this about you. That's the *costume du bal* in these parts."

"If you assure me, that my dress will be *comme il faut*, I'm agreed."

"It *wont* be with the long-tailed blue, I promise you."

The long-tailed blue was restored forthwith to its nook in my portmanteau.

St. Vrain was right. On arriving at the room, a large *sala* in the neighbourhood of the Plaza, we found it filled with hunters, trappers, traders, and teamsters, all swaggering about in their usual mountain "rig." Mixed among them, were some two or three score of the "natives," with an equal number of señoritas, all of whom, by their style of dress, I recognised as "poblanas," or persons of the lower class—the only class in fact to be met with in Santa Fé!

As we entered, most of the men had thrown

aside their serapes for the dance; and appeared in all the finery of embroidered velvet, stamped leather, and shining "castletops." The women looked not less picturesque, in their bright "naguas," snowy chemisettes, and small satin slippers. Some of them flounced it in polka jackets; for even to that remote region, the famous dance had found its way! "Have you heard of the electric telegraph?" "No, Señor." "Can you tell me what a railroad is?" "Quien sabe?" "La Polka?" "Ah! Señor, la polka, la polka, cosa buenita, tan graciosa! vaya!"

The ball room was a large oblong sala, with a "banquette" running all around it. Upon this the dancers seated themselves, drew out their husk cigarettes, chatted, and smoked during the intervals of the dance. In one corner, half-a-dozen sons of Orpheus twanged away upon harp, guitar, and bandolon; occasionally helping out the music with a shrill half-Indian chant. In another angle of the apartment, *puros*

and "Taos" whiskey were dealt out to the thirsty mountaineers, who made the *sala* ring with their wild ejaculations.

There were scenes like the following:

"Hyar, my little mochacha! vamos, vamos, ter dance! mucho bueno? Mucho bueno? Will ye?"

This is from a great rough fellow of six feet and over, addressed to a trim little poblana.

"Mucho bueno, Señor Americano!" replies the lady.

"Hooraw for you! Come along! let's licker fust! You're the gall for my beaver. Whart'll yer drink? Agwardent, or vino?"

"Copitita de vino, Señor." (A small glass of wine, Sir.)

"Hyar, yer darned greaser! Set out yer vino in a squll's jump! Now, my little 'un, hyar's luck, and a good husband!"

"Gracias, Señor Americano!"

"What! you understand that? You intende, do yer?"

"Si, Señor!"

"Hooraw, then! Look hyar, little 'un,—kin yer go the bar dance?"

"*No entiende.*"

"Yer don't understan' it! Hyar it is—this away;" and the clumsy hunter began to show off before his partner, in an imitation of the grizzly bear.

"Hilloa, Bill!" cries a comrade, "yer'll be trapped if yer don't look sharp. How's yer kidneys, hoss?"

"I'm dog-gone, Jim, if I don't feel queery about hyar," replies the hunter, spreading his great paw over the region of the heart.

"Don't be skeert, man—it's a nice gal, anyways."

"Nice! Draw a bead on them eyes, if yer kin; and jest squint down at them ankles!"

"Good sights—a heap o' quarter—clean shanks."

"I wonder what the old chap 'll take for her. I'm most froze for a squaw. Haint had nery one since I tuk back that Crow woman on the Yeller-stone."

"Wah, man! yer ain't among Injuns. Get the gal's consent, if yer kin, and she won't cost yer as much as a plug o' bacca."

"Hooray for old Missoura!" shouts a teamster.

"Come, boys! Let's show these yeer greasers a Virginny break down. 'Clar the kitchen, old folks, young folks.'"

"Go it hoe and toe! 'Old Virginny neber tire!'"

"Viva el gobernador! Viva Armijo! Viva! viva!"

An arrival at this moment caused a sensation in the room. A stout, fat, priest-like man entered, accompanied by several others. It was the governor and his suite, with a number of well-dressed citizens, who were no doubt the *elite* of New Mexican society. Some of the new comers were *militaires*, dressed in gaudy and foolish-looking uniforms, that were soon seen spinning around the room in the mazes of the waltz.

"Where is the Señora Armijo?" I whispered to St. Vrain.

"I told you as much. She—she wont be out. Stay here—I am going for a short while. Help yourself to a partner, and see some fun. I will be back presently. *Au revoir!*"

Without any further explanation, St. Vrain squeezed himself through the crowd, and disappeared.

I had been seated on the banquette, since entering the sala—St. Vrain beside me—in a retired corner of the room. A man of peculiar appearance occupied the seat next to St. Vrain, but farther into the shadow of a piece of furniture. I had noticed this man as we entered; and noticed too that St. Vrain spoke to him; but I was not introduced; and the interposition of my friend prevented me from making any further observation of him, until the latter had retired. We were now side by side; and I com-

menced a sort of angular reconnoisance of a face and figure that had somewhat strangely arrested my attention. He was not an American—that was evident from his dress—and yet the face was not Mexican. Its outlines were too bold for a Spanish face, though the complexion—from tan and exposure—was brown and swarth. His face was clean shaven, except the chin, that carried a pointed, darkish beard. The eye—if I saw it aright under the shadow of a slouched brim—was blue and mild; the hair brown and wavy, with here and there a strand of silver. These were not Spanish characteristics—much less Hispano-American—and I should have at once placed my neighbour elsewhere, but that his dress puzzled me. It was purely a Mexican costume, and consisted of a purple *manga*, with dark velvet embroidery around the vent and along the borders. As this garment covered the greater part of his person, I

could only see that underneath was a pair of green velveteen calzoneros, with yellow buttons, and snow-white calzoncillos puffing out along the seams. The bottoms of the calzoneros were trimmed with stamped black leather; and under these were yellow boots, with a heavy steel spur upon the heel of each. The broad peaked strap that confined the spur, passing over the foot, gave to it that peculiar *contour* that we observe in the pictures of armed knights of the olden time. He wore a black broad-brimmed sombrero, girdled by a thick band of gold bullion. A pair of tags of the same material, stuck out from the sides—the fashion of the country.

The man kept his sombrero slouched toward the light, as I thought or suspected, for the concealment of his face. And yet it was not an ill-favoured one. On the contrary, it was open and pleasing—no doubt had been handsome—before time, and what-

ever caused its melancholy expression, had lined and clouded it. It was this expression that had struck me on first seeing the man.

Whilst I was making these observations —eyeing him crosswise, all the while—I discovered that he was eyeing *me* in a similar manner; and with an interest apparently equal to my own. This caused us to face round to each other; when the stranger drew from under his manga a small beaded cigarerro; and, gracefully holding it out to me, said—

"*Quiere a fumar cavallero?*" (Would you smoke, sir?)

"Thank you—yes," I replied in Spanish; at the same time taking a cigar from the case.

We had hardly lit our cigarettes, when the man again turned to me, with the unexpected question:—

"Will you sell your horse?"

"No."

"Not for a good price?"

"Not for any price."

"I would give you five hundred dollars for him."

"I would not part with him for twice the amount."

"I will give twice the amount."

"I have become attached to him—money is no object."

"I am sorry to hear it—*I have come two hundred miles to buy that horse.*"

I looked at my new acquaintance with astonishment, involuntarily repeating his last words.

"You must have followed us from the Arkansas, then?"

"No, I came from the Rio Abajo."

"The Rio Abajo! You mean from down the Del Norté?"

"Yes."

"Then, my dear sir, it is a mistake. You

think you are talking to somebody else, and bidding for some other horse."

"Oh, no! He is yours. A black stallion with red nose, and long full tail—half-bred Arabian? There is a small mark over the left eye?"

This was certainly the description of Moro; and I began to feel a sort of superstitious awe in regard to my mysterious neighbour.

"True," replied I, "that is all correct; but I bought that stallion many months ago from a Louisiana planter. If you have just arrived from two hundred miles down the Rio Grande, how, may I ask, could you have known anything about me, or my horse?"

"Dispensadme, Caballero! I did not mean that. I came from below to meet the caravan, for the purpose of buying an *American* horse. Yours is the only one in the cavallada I would buy; and, it seems, the only one that is not for sale!"

"I am sorry for that; but I have tested

the qualities of this animal. We have become friends. No common motive would induce me to part with him."

"Ah, Senor! it is not a *common* motive, that makes me so eager to purchase him. If you knew *that*, perhaps—" he hesitated a moment—"but no—no—no," and after muttering some half-coherent words, among which I could recognise, the "Buenas noches, caballero!" the stranger rose up with the same mysterious air, that had all along characterized him; and left me. I could hear the tinkling of the small bell upon the rowels of his spurs, as he slowly warped himself through the gay crowd, and disappeared into the night!

The vacated seat was soon occupied by a dusky "manola," whose bright nagua, embroidered chemisette, brown ankles, and small blue slippers drew my attention. This was all I could see of her, except the occasional flash of a very black eye through the

loophole of the "rebozo tapado." By degrees, the rebozo became more generous—the loophole expanded—and the outlines of a very pretty, and very malicious, little face were displayed before me. The end of the scarf was adroitly removed from the left shoulder; and a nude plump arm, ending in a bunch of small jewelled fingers, hung carelessly down.

I am tolerably bashful; but, at the sight of this tempting partner, I could "hold in" no longer; and bending towards her, I said in my best Spanish, "Do me the favour, Miss, to waltz with me?"

The wicked little manola first held down her head, and blushed. Then raising the long fringes of her eyes, looked up again; and with a voice, as sweet as that of a canary-bird, replied:—

"Con gusto, Señor," (with pleasure, Sir).

"Nos vamos!" cried I, elated with my triumph; and, pairing off with my brilliant partner, we were soon whirling about in the "mazy."

We returned to our seats again; and after refreshing with a glass of "Albuquerque," a sponge-cake, and a "husk" cigarette, again "took the floor." This pleasurable programme we repeated some half-dozen times, varying the dance, only from waltz to polka—for my manola danced the polka, as if she had been a born Bohemian.

On one of my fingers was a fifty dollar diamond; which my partner seemed to think was "muy buenito." As her igneous eyes softened my heart, and the champagne was producing a similar effect upon my head, I began to speculate on the propriety of transferring the diamond from the smallest of my fingers to the largest of hers; which it would, no doubt, have fitted exactly. All at once, I became conscious of being under the surveillance of a large, and very fierce-looking *leperó*—a regular *pelado*—who followed us with his eyes, and sometimes *in persona*, to

every part of the room. The expression of his swarth face was a mixture of jealousy and vengeance—which my partner noticed, but as I thought—took no pains to soften down.

"Who is he?" I whispered, as the man swung past us in his chequered serapé.

"Esta mi marido, Señor." (It is my husband, sir,) was the cool reply!

I pushed the ring close up to the root of my finger, shutting my hand upon it as tight as a vice.

"Vamos a tomar otra copita!" (Let us take another glass of wine!) said I, resolving to bid my pretty "poblana," as soon as possible, a good night.

The Taos whiskey had by this time produced its effect upon the dancers. The trappers and teamsters had become noisy and riotous. The leperos—who now half filled the room—stimulated by wine, jealousy, old hates, and the dance, began to

look more savage and sulky. The fringed "hunting-shirts, and brown homespun frocks found favour with the dark-eyed "majas" of Mexico—partly out of a respect for—and a fear of—courage, which is often at the bottom of a love like theirs.

Although the trading caravans supplied almost all the commerce of Santa Fé, and it was clearly the interest of its inhabitants to be on good terms with the traders, the two races—Anglo-American and Hispano-Indian—hated each other thoroughly; and that hate was now displaying itself, on one side, in bullying contempt—on the other, in muttered "carajos" and fierce looks of vengeance.

I was still chatting with my lively partner. We were seated on the banquette, where I had introduced myself. On looking casually up, a bright object met my eyes. It appeared to be a naked knife in the hands of "su marido," who was just then lowering over us like the shadow of an

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evil spirit. I was favoured with only a slight glimpse of this dangerous meteor; and had made up my mind to "ware steel," when some one plucked me by the sleeve; and turning, I beheld my quondam acquaintance of the purple manga.

"Dispensadme, Señor," said he, nodding graciously, "I have just learned that the caravan is going on to Chihuahua."

"True—there is no market here for our goods."

"You go on then of course?"

"Certainly—I must."

"Will you return this way, Señor?"

"It is very likely—I have no other intention at present."

"Perhaps—*then*, you might be willing to part with your horse?—You will find many as good in the great valley of the Mississippi."

"Neither is likely."

"But, Señor, should you be so inclined, will you promise me the refusal of him?"

"Oh! that I will promise you with all my heart."

Our conversation was here interrupted by a huge, gaunt, half-drunken Missourian, who, trampling rudely upon the stranger's toes, vociferated—

"Ye—up, old greaser! and gi' me a char."

"Y porque?" (and why?) demanded the Mexican, drawing in his feet, and looking up with astonished indignation.

"Porky be d—d! I'm tired jumpin—I want a seat, that's it, old hos."

There was something so bullying and brutal in the conduct of this man, that I felt called upon to interfere.

"Come!" said I, addressing him, "you have no right to deprive this gentleman of his seat—much less in such a fashion."

"Eh, Mister? who the h—ll asked you to open yer head? Ye—up, I say!" and, at the word, he seized the Mexican by the corner of his manga, as if to drag him from his seat.

Before I had time to reply to this rude speech and gesture, the stranger leaped to his feet; and, with a well-planted blow, felled the bully upon the floor.

This seemed to act as a signal for bringing several other quarrels to a climax. There was a rush through all parts of the Sala —drunken shouts mingled with yells of vengeance—knives glanced from their sheaths—women screamed—pistols flashed and cracked, filling the room with smoke and dust. The lights went out—fierce struggles could be heard in the darkness—the fall of heavy bodies amidst groans and curses—and for five minutes these were the only sounds.

Having no cause to be particularly angry with anybody, I stood where I had risen, without using either knife or pistol—my frightened "maja" all the while holding me by the hand. A painful sensation near my left shoulder caused me suddenly to drop

my partner; and, with that unaccountable weakness consequent upon the reception of a wound, I felt myself staggering toward the banquette. Here I dropped into a sitting posture; and remained till the struggle was over—conscious, all the while, that a stream of blood was oozing down my back, and saturating my under garments.

I sat thus till the struggle had ended. A light was brought; and I could distinguish a number of men in hunting shirts moving to and fro with violent gesticulations. Some of them were advocating the justice of the "spree," as they termed it; while others, the more respectable of the traders, were denouncing it. The *leperos*, with the women, had all disappeared; and I could perceive that the Americans had carried the day. Several dark objects lay along the floor—they were bodies of men dead or dying! One was an American—the Missourian who had been the immediate cause of the fracas

—the others were *pelados*. I could see nothing of my late acquaintance. My fandanguera, too—con su marido—had disappeared; and, on glancing at my left hand, I came to the conclusion that so also had my diamond ring!

"St. Vrain! St. Vrain!" I called, seeing the figure of my friend enter at the door.

"Where are you, H., old boy? How is it with you; all right, eh?"

"Not quite, I fear."

"Good God! what's this? why, you're stabbed in the hump ribs! Not bad, I hope. Off with your shirt and let's see."

"First, let us to my room."

"Come then, my dear boy, lean on me—so, so."

The fandango was over.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEGUIN, THE SCALP-HUNTER.

I HAVE had the pleasure of being wounded in the field of battle. I say *pleasure*. Under certain circumstances, wounds are luxuries. You have been carried on a "stretcher" to some secure spot. An aide-de-camp drops from his sweating horse; and announces that "the enemy is in full flight:" thus relieving you from the apprehension of being transfixed by some moustached lancer—a friendly surgeon bends over you; and, after groping awhile about your wound, tells you

it is "only a scratch," and that it will be well in a week or two:—then come visions of glory—the glory of the Gazette:—present pains are forgotten in the contemplation of future triumphs—the congratulations of friends—the smiles, perchance, of one dearer than all. Consoled by such anticipations, you lie back on your rude couch, smiling at a bullet hole through your thigh, or the slash of a sabre across your arm.

I have had these emotions. How different were the feelings I experienced, while smarting under wounds that came by the steel of the assassin!

My earliest anxiety was about the "depth" of my wound. Was it mortal? This is generally the first question a man puts to himself, after discovering that he has been shot, or stabbed. A wounded man cannot always answer it either. One's life-blood may be spurting from the artery at each palpitation, while the actual pain felt is not worth the pricking of a pin.

On reaching the Fonda, I sank exhausted on my bed. St. Vrain split my hunting shirt from cape to skirt; and commenced examining my wound. I could not see my friend's face, as he stood behind me; and I waited with impatience.

"Is it deep?" I asked.

"Not deep as a draw-well, nor wide as a wagon-track," was the reply. "You're quite safe, old fellow; thank God, and not the man that handled that knife—for the fellow plainly intended to do for you. It is the cut of a Spanish knife, and a devilish gash it is. By the Lord! Haller, it was a close shave. One inch more, and the spine, my boy! But you're safe, I say. Here, Godé! that sponge?"

"*Sacré*," muttered Godé, with true Gallic aspirate, as he handed the wet rag.

I felt the cold application. Then a bunch of soft raw cotton—the best dressing it could have—was laid over the wound, and

fastened by strips. The most skilful surgeon could have done no more.

"Close as a clam," added St. Vrain, as he fastened the last pin, and placed me in the easiest position. "But what started the row? and how came you to cut such a figure in it? I was out, thank God."

"Did you observe a strange-looking man——?"

"What! with the purple manga?"

"Yes."

"He sat beside us?"

"Yes."

"Ha! No wonder you say, a strange-looking man—stranger than he looks too. I saw him, I know him, and perhaps not another in the room could say that—aye—there *was* another," continued St. Vrain, with a peculiar smile; "but what could have brought *him* there is that which puzzles me. Armijo could not have seen him—but—go on."

I related to St. Vrain the whole of my conversation with the stranger, and the incidents that had led to the breaking up of the fandango.

"It is odd—very odd. What the deuce could he want with your horse? Two hundred miles, and offers a thousand dollars!"

"Enfant de Gârce, Capitaine." (Godé had called me captain ever since the ride upon the buffalo), "if Monsieur come two hunred mile, and vill pay un mille thousan dollar, Pe Gar, he Moro like ver—ver moch. Un grand passion pour le cheval. Pourquois—vy he no like him ver sheep? vy he no steal 'im?

I started at the suggestion, and looked toward St. Vrain.

"Vith permiss of le capitaine, I vill le cheval cachê," continued the Canadian, moving toward the door.

"You need not trouble yourself, old Nor-west, as far as that gentleman is

concerned. He'll not steal your horse—though that's no reason why you should not fulfil your intention, and *cache* the animal. There are thieves enough in Santa Fé to steal the horses of a whole regiment. You had better fasten him by the door here."

Godé, after devoting Santa Fé and its inhabitants to a much warmer climate than Canada, passed to the door, and disappeared.

"Who is he?" I asked, "this man, about whom there seems to be so much that is mysterious?"

"Ah! if you knew. I will tell you some queer passages, by-and-by, but not to-night. You have no need of excitement. That is the famous Seguin—the Scalp-Hunter.

"The Scalp-Hunter!"

"Aye! you have heard of him, no doubt; at least you would, had you been much among the mountains."

"I have. The hellish ruffian—the wholesale butcher of innocent—"

A dark waif danced against the wall. It was the shadow of a man. I looked up. Seguin was before me!

St. Vrain, on seeing him enter, had turned away; and stood looking out of the window.

I was on the point of changing my tirade into the apostrophic form—and at the same time ordering the man out of my sight—when something in his look influenced me to remain silent. I could not tell whether he had heard, or understood to whom my abusive epithets had been applied; but there was nothing in his manner that betrayed his having done so. I observed only the same look that had at first attracted me—the same expression of deep melancholy.

Could this man be the hardened and heartless villain I had heard of? the author of so many atrocities?

"Sir," said he, seeing that I remained silent, "I deeply regret what has happened you. I was the involuntary cause of your mishap. Is your wound a severe one?"

"It is not," I replied, with a dryness of manner that seemed somewhat to discompose him.

"I am glad of that," he continued, after a pause. "I came to thank you for your generous interference. I leave Santa Fé in ten minutes. I must bid you farewell."

He held forth his hand. I muttered the word "farewell," but without offering to exchange the salutation. The stories of cruel atrocity, connected with the name of this man, came into my mind at the moment; and I felt a loathing for him. His arm remained in its outstretched position, while a strange expression began to steal over his countenance, as he saw that I hesitated.

"I cannot take your hand," I said at length.

"And why?" he asked, in a mild tone.

"Why! it is red—red; away, sir, away!"

He fixed his eyes upon me with a sorrowful look. There was not a spark of anger in them. He drew his hand within the folds of his manga; and, uttering a deep sigh, turned and walked slowly out of the room.

St. Vrain, who had wheeled round at the close of this scene, strode forward to the door, and stood looking after him. I could see the Mexican, from where I lay, as he crossed the quadrangular *patio*. He had shrugged himself closely in his manga; and was moving off in an attitude that betokened the deepest dejection. In a moment he was out of sight—having passed through the *saguan*, and into the street.

"There is something truly mysterious about that man. Tell me, St. Vrain——"

"Hush-sh! look yonder!" interrupted my friend, pointing through the open door.

I looked out into the moonlight. Three human forms were moving along the wall, to-

ward the entrance of the patio. Their height, their peculiar attitudes, and the stealthy silence of their steps, convinced me they were Indians. The next moment they were lost under the dark shadows of the saguan.

"Who are they?" I inquired.

"Worse enemies to poor Seguin than you would be, if you knew him better. I pity him, if those hungry hawks overtake him in the dark. But no; he's worth warning, and a hand to help him, if need be. He shall have it. Keep cool, Harry. I will be back in a jiffy."

So saying, St. Vrain left me; and, the moment after, I could see his light form passing hastily out of the gate!

I lay, reflecting on the strangeness of the incidents that seemed to be occurring around me. I was not without some painful reflections. I had wounded the feelings of one, who had not injured me, and for whom my friend evidently entertained a high respect.

A shod hoof sounded upon the stones outside; it was Godé with my horse; and, the next moment, I heard him hammering the picket-pin into the pavement.

Shortly after, St. Vrain himself returned.

"Well," I inquired, "what happened you?"

"Nothing much. That's a weasel that never sleeps. He had mounted his horse before they came up with him; and was very soon out of their reach."

"But may they not follow him on horseback?"

"That is not likely. He has comrades not far from here, I warrant you. Armijo —and it was he sent those villains on his track—has no force that dare follow *him* when he gets upon the wild hills. No fear for him, once he has cleared the houses."

"But, my dear St. Vrain, tell me what you know of this singular man. I am wound up to a pitch of curiosity."

"Not to-night, Harry; not to-night. I do not wish to cause you further excitement; besides I have reason to leave you now. To-morrow, then. Good night! good night!"

And so saying, my mercurial friend left me to Godé, and a night of restlessness.

CHAPTER IX.

LEFT BEHIND.

On the third day after the fandango, it is announced that the caravan will move onward to Chihuahua.

The day arrives, and I am unable to travel with it. My surgeon,—a wretched leech of a Mexican,—assures me, that it will be certain death to attempt the journey. For want of any opposing evidence, I am constrained to believe him. I have no alternative, but adopt the joyless resolve to remain in Santa Fé, until the return of the traders.

Chafing on a feverish bed, I take leave of my late companions. We part with many regrets; but above all, I am pained at bidding adieu to St. Vrain, whose light-hearted companionship has been my solace through three days of suffering. He has proved my friend; and has undertaken to take charge of my wagons, and dispose of my goods in the market of Chihuahua.

"Do not fret, man," says he, taking leave. "Kill time with the champagne of El Paso. We will be back in a squirrel's jump; and trust me, I will bring you a mule-load of Mexican shiners. God bless you—good bye!'

I can sit up in my bed; and from the open window, see the white tilts of the wagons, as the train rolls over a neighbouring hill. I hear the cracking whips, and the deep-toned "wo-ha" of the teamsters —I see the traders mount and gallop after; and I turn upon my couch with a feeling of loneliness and desertion.

For days I lie tossing and fretting, despite the consolatory influence of the champagne; and the rude but kindly attentions of my voyageur valet.

I rise at length—dress myself—and sit in my "ventana." I have a good view of the plazza, and the adjacent streets, with their rows of brown *adobé* houses, and dusty ways between.

I gaze, hour after hour, on what is passing without. The scene is not without novelty, as well as variety. Swarthy ill-favoured faces appear behind the folds of dingy rebozos. Fierce glances lower under the slouch of broad sombreros. Poblanas with short skirts, and slippered feet, pass my window; and groups of "tame" Indians,—Pueblos—crowd in from the neighbouring rancherias, belabouring their donkeys as they go. These bring baskets of fruit and vegetables. They squat down upon the dusty plazza, behind piles of prickly pears, or pyramids of toma-

toes and chilé. The women—light-hearted huxters—laugh and sing, and chatter continuously. The *tortillera*, kneeling by her *metaté*, bruises the boiled maize: claps it into thin cakes, flings it on the heated stone, and then cries "*tortillas! tortillas calientes!*" The Cocinera stirs the peppery stew of chilé colorado—lifts the red liquid in her wooden ladle; and invites her customers by the expressions "*Chilé bueno! excellente!*" "*Carbon! carbon!*" cries the charcoal-burner. "*Agua! agua limpia!*" shouts the aguadoré. "*Pan fino—pan blanco!*" screams the baker; and other cries—from the venders of *atolé*, *huevos*, and *leché*,—are uttered in shrill discordant voices. Such are the voices of a Mexican "plazza."

They are at first interesting. They become monotonous,—then disagreeable, until at length I am tortured; and listen to them with a feverish excitement.

After a few days, I was able to walk,—and

went out with my faithful Godé. We strolled through the town It reminded me of an extensive brick-field, before the kilns have been set on fire.

We encountered the same brown adobés everywhere — the same villanous-looking leperos lounging at the corners,—the same bare-legged slippered wenches—the same strings of belaboured donkeys,—the same shrill and detestable cries.

We passed by a ruinous-looking house in a remote quarter. Our ears were saluted by voices from within. We heard shouts of "*Mueran los Yankees! Abajo los Americanos!*" No doubt the *pelado*—to whom I was indebted for my wound—was among the ruffians who crowded into the windows; but I knew the lawlessness of the place too well, to apply for justice.

We heard the same shouts in another street, —again in the plazza; and Godé and I re-entered the Fonda, with a conviction, that

our appearance in public might be attended with danger. We resolved therefore to keep within doors.

In all my life I never suffered ennui, as when cooped up in this semi-barbarous town; and almost confined within the walls of its filthy fonda. I felt it the more that I had so lately enjoyed the company of such free jovial spirits, and I could fancy them in their bivouacs on the banks of the Del Norté, carousing, laughing, or listening to some wild mountain story.

Godé shared my feelings; and became as despondingas myself. The light humour of the voyageur disappeared. The song of the Canadian boatman was heard no longer; but, in its place, the "sacre," the "Enfant de garce," and the English "God-dam," were sputtered plentifully, and hurled at everything Mexican. I resolved at length to put an end to our sufferings.

"This life will never do, Godé," said I addressing my compagnon.

"Ah! Monsieur, nevare! nevare it will do. Ah! ver doll. It is like von assemblée of le dam Quaker."

"I am determined to endure it no longer."

"But what can Monsieur do?" How, Capitaine?"

"By leaving this accursed place; and that to-morrow."

"But is Monsieur fort—strongs beaucoup strongs to ride?"

"I will risk it, Godé. If I break down, there are other towns on the river, where we can halt. Anywhere better than here."

"C'est vrai, Capitaine. Beautiful village down the river. Albuquerque—Tomé—ver many village. Mon Dieu!—all better. Santa Fé is one camp of dam thief. Ver good for us go, Monsieur; ver good."

"Good or not, Godé, I am going. So make your preparations to-night, for I will leave in the morning before sunrise."

"Dieu merci! It vill be von grand plaisir to makes ready." And the Canadian ran from the room, snapping his fingers with delight.

I had made up my mind to leave Santa Fé at any rate. Should my strength—yet but half restored—hold out, I would follow, and if possible, overtake the caravan. I knew it could make but short journeys over the deep sand roads of the Del Norté. Should I not succeed in coming up with it, I could halt in Albuquerque or El Paso—either of which would offer me a residence, at least as agreeable as the one I was leaving.

My surgeon endeavoured to dissuade me from setting out. He represented that I was in a most critical condition. My wound far from being cicatrized. He set forth in most eloquent terms the dangers of fever, of gangrene, of hemorrhage. He saw I was obstinate, and concluded his monitions, by presenting his bill. It amounted to the

modest sum of 100 dollars! It was an extortion. What could I do? I stormed and protested. The Mexican threatened me with "governor's" justice. Godé swore in French, Spanish, English, and Indian. It was all to no purpose. I saw that the bill would have to be paid; and I paid it—though with indifferent grace.

The leech disappeared, and the landlord came next. He, like the former, made earnest entreaty to prevent me from setting forth. He offered a variety of reasons to detain me.

"Do not go; for your life, Señor, do not."

"And why, good José?" I inquired.

"O, Señor; los Indios bravos—los Navajoes! carrambo!"

"But I am not going into the Indian country. I travel down the river—through the towns of New Mexico."

"Ah! Señor, the towns—no hay seguridad. No—no—there is safety nowhere from the Navajo. Hay novedades—news

this very day. Polvidera—pobre Polvidera! It was attacked on Sunday last. On Sunday, Señor, when they were all en la misa. Pues, Señor, the robbers surrounded the church; and oh, Carrambo! they dragged out the poor people—men, women and children! Pues, Señor; they killed the men—and the women—Dios de mi alma!"

"Well, and the women?"

"O, Señor; they are all gone—they were carried to the mountains by the savages. Pobres mugeres!"

"It is a sad story truly; but the Indians, I understand, only make these forays at long intervals. I am not likely to meet with them now. At all events, José, I have made up my mind to run the risk."

"But Señor," continued José, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, "there are other ladrones besides the Indians—white ones—muchos—muchissimos! Aye, indeed, mi amo, white robbers—blancos—blancos y muy feos—carrai!"

And José closed his fingers as if clutching some imaginary object.

This appeal to my fears was in vain. I answered it by pointing to my revolvers and rifle; and to the well-filled belt of my henchman Godé.

When the Mexican boniface saw that I was determined to rob him of all the guests he had in his house, he retired sullenly; and shortly after returned with *his* bill. Like that of the "medico," it was out of all proportion; but I could not help myself; and paid it.

By grey dawn I was in my saddle; and, followed by Godé and a couple of heavily packed mules, I rode out of the ill-favoured town; and took the road for the "Rio Abajo."

CHAPTER X.

THE DEL NORTÉ.

For days we journey down the Del Norté. We pass through numerous villages, many of them types of Santa Fé. We cross the zequias and irrigating canals; and pass along fields of bright green maize plants. We see vineyards and grand haciendas. These appear richer and more prosperous, as we approach the southern part of the province —the Rio Abajo.

In the distance, both east and west, we descry dark mountains rolled up against the sky. These are the twin ranges of

the Rocky Mountains. Long spurs trend toward the river, and in places appear to close up the valley. They add to the expression of many a beautiful landscape, that opens before us as we move onward.

We see picturesque costumes in the villages, and along the highways. Men dressed in the checquered serape or the striped blanket of the Navajoes; conical sombreros with broad brims; calzoneros of velveteen, with their rows of shining castle-tops, and fastened at the waist by the jaunty sash. We see mangas and tilmas, and men wearing the sandal as in Eastern lands. On the women we observe the graceful rebozo, the short nagua, and the embroidered chemisette.

We see rude implements of husbandry; the creaking carreta, with its block wheels; the primitive plough of the forking tree-branch, scarcely scoring the soil; the horn-yoked oxen; the goad; the clumsy hoe, in

the hands of the peon serf,—these are all objects that are new and curious to our eyes; and that indicate the lowest order of agricultural knowledge.

Along the roads we meet numerous atajos, in charge of their arrieros. We observe the mules, small, smooth, light-limbed, and vicious. We glance at the heavy alparejas and bright worsted apishamores. We notice the tight wiry mustangs, ridden by the arrieros; the high-peaked saddles and hair bridles; the swarth faces and pointed beards of the riders; the huge spurs, that tinkle at every step; the exclamations, "Hola! mula! mula! malraya! vaya!"—we notice all these; and they tell us we are journeying in the land of the Spano-American.

Under other circumstances, these objects would have interested me. At that time, they appeared to me like the pictures of a panorama, or the changing scenes of a continuous dream. As such, have they left

their impressions on my memory. I was under the incipient delirium of fever.

It was yet only incipient; nevertheless, it distorted the images around me, and rendered their impressions unnatural and wearisome. My wound began to pain me afresh; and the hot sun, and the dust, and the thirst with the miserable accommodations of New Mexican posadas—vexed me to an excess of endurance.

On the fifth day, after leaving Santa Fé, we entered the wretched little "pueblo" of Parida. It was my intention to have remained there all night; but it proved a ruffian sort of place, with meagre chances of comfort; and I moved on to Socorro. This is the last inhabited spot in New Mexico, as you approach the terrible desert—the Jornada del Muerte.

Godé had never made the journey; and at Parida I had obtained one thing that we stood in need of—a guide. He

had volunteered; and as I learnt that it would be no easy task to procure one at Socorro, I was fain to take him along. He was a coarse, shaggy-looking customer; and I did not at all like his appearance; but I found, on reaching Socorro, that what I had heard was correct. No guide could be hired on any terms—so great was their dread of the Jornada, and its occasional denizens, the Apachés.

Socorro was alive with Indian rumours—*novedades*. The Indians had fallen upon an atajo near the crossing of Fra Cristobal; and murdered the arrieros to a man. The village was full of consternation at the news. The people dreaded an attack; and thought me mad, when I made known my intention of crossing the Jornada.

I began to fear they would frighten my guide from his engagement; but the fellow stood out staunchly, still expressing his willingness to accompany us.

Without the prospect of meeting the Apaché savages, I was but ill prepared for the Jornada. The pain of my wound had increased; and I was fatigued, and burning with fever.

But the caravan had passed through Socorro only three days before; and I was in hopes of overtaking my old companions before they could leave El Paso. This determined me to proceed in the morning; and I made arrangements for an early start.

Godé and I were awake before dawn. My attendant went out to summon the guide, and saddle our animals. I remained in the house making preparations for a cup of coffee before starting. I was assisted by the landlord of the posada, who had arisen; and was stalking about in his serapé.

While thus engaged, I was startled by the voice of Godé calling from without, "Mon maitre! mon maitre! the dam rascal have him run vay!"

"What do you mean? Who has run away?"

"O Monsieur! le dam Mexicane, vith vou mule, has robb, and run vay. Allons, Monsieur, allons!"

I followed the Canadian to the stable with a feeling of anxiety. My horse—but no—thank heaven, he was there! One of the mules—the macho—was gone. It was the one which the guide had ridden from Parida.

"Perhaps he is not off yet," I suggested. "He may still be in the town."

We sent and went in all directions to find him; but to no purpose. We were relieved at length from all doubts by the arrival of some early market men, who had met such a man as our guide far up the river, and riding a mule at full gallop.

What should we do? Follow him to Parida? No; that would be a journey for nothing. I knew that he would not be

fool enough to go that way. Even if he did, it would have been a fool's errand to seek for justice there; so I determined on leaving it over, until the return of the traders would enable me to find the thief, and demand his punishment from the authorities.

My regrets at the loss of my macho were not unmixed with a sort of gratitude to the fellow, when I laid my hand upon the nose of my whimpering charger. What hindered him from taking the horse instead of the mule? It is a question I have never been able to answer to this day. I can only account for the fellow's preference for the mule on the score of downright honesty, or the most perverse stupidity.

I made overtures for another guide. I applied to the boniface of Socorro, but without success. He knew no "mozo" who would undertake the journey.

"Los Apachés—los Apachés!"

I appealed to the peons and loiterers of the plazza.

"Los Apachés!"

Wherever I went, I was answered with, "Los Apachés," and a shake of the fore-finger before the nose—a negative sign over all Mexico.

"It is plain, Godé, we can get no guide. We must try this Jornada without one. What say you, voyageur?"

"I am agree, mon maitre—allons!"

And, followed by my faithful *compagnon*, with our remaining pack-mule, I took the road that leads to the desert. That night we slept among the ruins of Valverde; and the next morning, after an early start, embarked upon the "Journey of Death."

CHAPTER XI.

THE "JOURNEY OF DEATH."

In two hours we reach the crossing at Fra Cristobal. Here the road parts from the river, and strikes into the waterless desert. We plunge through the shallow ford, coming out on the eastern bank. We fill our "xuages" with care, and give our animals as much as they will drink. After a short halt to refresh ourselves, we ride onward.

We have not travelled far, before we recognise the appropriate name of this terrible journey. Scattered along the path we see

the bones of many animals. There are human bones too! That white spheroidal mass, with its grinning rows and serrated sutures —that is a human skull. It lies beside the skeleton of a horse. Horse and rider have fallen together. The wolves have stripped them at the same time. They have dropped down on their thirsty track, and perished in despair, although water—had they known it—was within reach of another effort!

We see the skeleton of a mule, with the alpareja still buckled around it, and an old blanket, flapped and tossed by many a whistling wind.

Other objects, that have been brought there by human aid, strike the eye as we proceed. A bruised canteen—the fragments of a glass bottle—an old hat—a piece of saddle-cloth —a stirrup, red with rust—a broken strap—with many like symbols, are strewed along our path, speaking a melancholy language.

We are still only on the border of the desert. We are fresh. How, when we have

travelled over and neared the opposite side? Shall *we* leave such souvenirs?

We are filled with painful forebodings, as we look across the arid waste that stretches indefinitely before us. We do not dread the Apaché. Nature herself is the enemy we fear.

Taking the wagon tracks for our guide, we creep on. We grow silent, as if we were dumb. The mountains of Cristobal sink behind us; and we are almost "out of sight of land." We can see the ridges of the Sierra Blanca away to the eastward; but before us—to the south—the eye encounters no mark or limit.

The sun grows hotter and hotter. I knew this would be the case, when we started. It was one of those cool mornings, with fog on the river and in the air. In all my wanderings, through many climes, I have observed such mornings to be the harbingers of sultry hours at noon.

The sun is climbing upward, and every moment his rays become fiercer and more fervid. There is a strong wind blowing; but it does not fan us into coolness. On the contrary, it lifts the burning crystals, and spits them painfully in our faces!

The sun has climbed to the zenith. We toil on through the yielding sand. For miles we see no traces of vegetation. The wagon tracks guide us no longer. The drift has obscured them!

We enter a plain covered with artemisia, and clumps of the hideous greasewood.

The warped and twisted branches impede our progress. For hours we ride through thickets of the bitter sage; and at length enter another region, sandy and rolling. Long arid spurs shoot down from the mountains; and decline into ridges of dry drifting sand. Now not even the silvery leaf of the artemisia cheers our path. Before us, we see nothing but barren yellow waste —trackless and treeless!

A tropical sun glances up from the brilliant surface; and we are almost blinded by the refracted rays. The wind blows more lightly; and clouds of dust load the air, sweeping slowly along!

We push forward without guide or any object to indicate our course. We are soon in the midst of bewilderment. A scene of seeming enchantment springs up around us. Vast towers of sand—borne up by the whirl-blast—rise vertically to the sky. They move to and fro over the plain. They are yellow and luminous. The sun glistens among their floating crystals. They move slowly, but they are approaching us!

I behold them with feelings of awe. I have heard of travellers lifted in their whirling vortex, and dashed back again from fearful heights!

The pack mule—frightened at the phenomenon—breaks the lasso, and scampers away among the ridges. Godé has galloped in pursuit. I am alone!

Nine or ten gigantic columns now appear, and stalk over the plain, circling gradually around me! There is something unearthly in the appearance. They resemble creatures of a phantom world. They seem endowed with demon life!

Two of them approach each other. There is a short gusty struggle, that ends in their mutual destruction. The sand is precipitated to the earth; and the dust floats off in dun shapeless masses.

Several have shut me within a space, and are slowly closing. My dog howls and barks. My horse cowers with affright, and shivers between my thighs, uttering terrified expressions!

I am irresolute. I sit in my saddle waiting the result, with an indescribable feeling. My ears are filled with a buzzing sound, like the hum of machinery. My eyes distort the natural hues into a fiery brightness. My brain reels. Strange objects appear. The fever is upon me!

The laden currents clash in their wild torsion. I am twisted around, and torn from my saddle,—my eyes, mouth, and ears are filled with dust. Sand, stones, and branches strike me spitefully in the face; and I am flung with violence to the earth!

* * * *

I lay for a moment where I had fallen, half buried and blind. I could perceive that thick clouds of dust were still sweeping over me.

I was neither stunned nor hurt; and I began to grope around me, for as yet I could see nothing. My eyes were full of sand, and pained me exceedingly. Throwing out my arms, I felt for my horse,—I called him by name. A low whimper answered me. I staggered toward the spot, and laid my hands upon him,—he was down upon his flank. I seized the bridle, and he sprang up; but I could feel that he was shivering like an aspen!

I stood by my horse's head for nearly half an hour, rubbing the dust from my eyes; and waiting until the simoon might settle away. At length the atmosphere grew clearer, and I could see the sky. The sand still drifted along the ridges, and I could not distinguish the surface of the plain. There were no signs of Godé. He might be near me notwithstanding; and I shouted loudly, calling him by name. I listened, but there was no answer. Again I raised my voice, and with a like result. There was no sound but the singing of the wind.

I mounted; and commenced riding over the plain in search of my comrade. I had no idea of what direction he might have taken.

I made a circuit of a mile or so—still calling his name as I went. I received no reply, and could see no traces upon the ground. I rode for an hour, galloping from ridge to ridge, but still without meet-

ing any signs of my comrade or the mules. I pulled up in despair. I had shouted, until I was faint and hoarse. I could search no longer.

I was thirsty and would drink. "O God! my *xuages* are broken! the pack mule has carried off the water-skin."

The crushed calabash still hung upon its thong; but the last drops it had contained, were trickling down the flanks of my horse. I knew that I might be fifty miles from water!

You cannot understand the fearfulness of this situation. You live in a northern zone—in a land of pools and streams and limpid springs. You have never felt thirst. You know not the want of water. It gushes from every hill side; and you have grown fastidious about its quality. You complain of its hardness, its softness, or its want of crystal purity. How unlike the denizen of the desert—the voyageur of the prairie

sea! Water is his chief care—his ever present solicitude. Water the divinity he worships.

Hunger he can stifle—so long as a patch of his leathern garment hangs to him. Should game not appear, he can trap the marmot, catch the lizard, and gather the prairie crickets. He knows every root and seed that will sustain life. Give him water, and he will live and struggle on. He will, in time, crawl out of the desert. Without this, he may chew the leaden bullet, or the pebble of chalcedony. He may split the spheroid cactus; and open the intestines of the butchered buffalo; but in the end he must die. Without water, even in the midst of plenty —plenty of food—he must die. Ah! you know not thirst. It is a fearful thing. In the wild western desert it is the *thirst that kills!*

No wonder I was filled with despair. I believed myself to be about the middle of

the Jornada. I knew that I could never reach the other side without water. The yearning had already begun. My throat and tongue felt shrivelled and parched. Thirst and fever had done it. The desert dust, too, had contributed its share. Fierce desires already gnawed me with ceaseless tooth!

I had lost all knowledge of the course I should take. The mountains—hitherto our guide—seemed to trend in every direction. Their numerous spurs puzzled me.

I remembered hearing of a spring—the Ojo del Muerto—that was said to lie westward of the trail. Sometimes there was water in this spring. On other occasions travellers had reached it, only to find the fountain dried up, and leave their bones upon its banks! So ran the tales in Socorro.

For some minutes I vacillated; and then, pulling the right rein of my bridle almost

involuntarily, I headed my horse westward. I would seek the spring; and, should I fail to find it, push on to the river. This was turning out of my course; but I must reach the water, and save my life.

I sat in my saddle, faint and choking, leaving my animal to go at will. I had lost the energy to guide him.

He went many miles—westward—for the sun told me the course. I was suddenly roused from my stupor. A glad sight was before me. A lake! A lake shining like crystal! Was I certain I saw it? Could it be the *mirage?* No. Its outlines were too sharply defined. It had not that filmy whitish appearance which distinguishes the latter phenomenon. No. It was not the mirage. It was water!

I involuntarily pressed the spur against the sides of my horse. But he needed not that. He had already eyed the water; and sprang forward inspirited with new energy. The next moment he was in it to his flanks.

I flung myself from the saddle with a plunge. I was about to lift the water in my concave palms, when the actions of my horse attracted me. Instead of drinking greedily, he stood tossing his head with snorts of disappointment! My dog too refused to lap; and ran along the shore whining and howling!

I knew what this meant; but—with that common obstinacy which refuses all testimony but the evidence of the senses—I lifted some drops in my hand, and applied them to my lips. They were briny and burning! I might have known this before reaching the lake, for I had ridden through a salt incrustation that surrounded it like a belt of snow. But my brain was fevered. My reason had left me!

It was of no use remaining where I was. I climbed back into my saddle; and rode along the shore, over fields of snow-white salt! Here and there, my horse's hoof rang against

bleaching bones of animals—the remains of many a victim. Well was this lake named the Laguna del Muerto—the "Lake of Death!"

Reaching its southern point, I again headed westward, in hopes of striking the river.

From this time until a later period,—when I found myself in a far different scene—I have no distinct memories. Incidents, I remember, unconnected with each other, but nevertheless real. These are linked, in my memory, with others so wild and improbable, that I can only consider the latter as fancies of the madness that was then upon me. But some were real. My reason must have returned at intervals, by some strange oscillation of the brain!

I remember dismounting on a high bank—I must have travelled unconsciously for hours before—for the sun was low down, on the horizon, as I alighted. It was a very

high bank—a precipice—and below me I saw a beautiful river sweeping onward through groves of emerald greenness. I thought there were many birds fluttering in the groves; and their voices rang in delicious melody. There was fragrance on the air; and the scene below me seemed an Elysium. I thought, that, around where I stood, all was bleak, and barren, and parched with intolerable heat. I was tortured with a slakeless thirst, that grew fiercer, as I gazed on the flowing water. These were real incidents. All this was true. * * * *

I must drink. I must to the river. It is cool sweet water. Oh! I must drink. What! A horrid cliff! No—I will not go down there. I can descend more easily here. Who are these forms? Who are you, sir? Ah! it is you, my brave Moro; and you, Alp. Come! Come! Follow me! Down—down to the river! Ah! Again

that accursed cliff! Look at the beautiful water! It smiles! It ripples—on—on—on! Let us drink! No—not yet—we cannot yet. We must go farther. Ugh! Such a height to leap from! But we must drink—one and all. Come, Godé! Come, Moro—old friend! Alp! Come on! We will reach it—we will drink. Who is Tantalus? Ha! ha! Not I—not I. Stand back, fiends! Do not push me over! Back! back, I say. Oh! * * * *

I thought that forms—many of them—forms, strange and fiend-like—clustered around me; and dragged me to the brink of the cliff. I was launched out in the air. I felt myself falling—falling—falling, and still came no nearer to the green trees, and the bright water, though I could see them shining below me!

* * * *

I rest upon a rock—a mass of vast dimensions—but it is not at rest. It is swim-

ming onward through empty space. I cannot move myself. I lie helpless—stretched along its surface—while it sweeps onward. It is an aerolite. It can be nothing but that. O God! there will be a terrible collision when it strikes some planet world! Horror! horror! * *

I am lying on the ground—the ground of the earth. It upheaves beneath me, and oscillates to and fro like the undulations of an earthquake! * * *

Part of all this was reality; part was a dream—a dream, that bore some resemblance to the horrors of a *first intoxication.*

CHAPTER XII.

ZOE.

I LAY tracing the figures upon the curtains. They were scenes of the olden time. Mailed knights, helmed and mounted, dashing at each other with couched lances; or tumbling from their horses, pierced by the spear. Other scenes there were: noble dames, sitting on Flemish palfreys, and watching the flight of the merlin hawk. There were pages in waiting; and dogs, of curious and extinct breeds, held in the leash. Perhaps these never existed, except in the dreams of some old-fashioned artist; but

my eye followed their strange shapes with a sort of half idiotic wonder.

I was forcibly impressed with the noble features of the dames. Was that, too, a fancy of the painter? or were those divine outlines of face and figure typical of the times? If so, no wonder that corselets were crushed, and lances shivered for their smiles.

Metallic rods upheld the curtains—rods that shone brightly, and curved upwards, forming a canopy. My eyes ran along these rods, scanning their configuration, and admiring, as a child admires, the regularity of their curves. I was not in my own land. These things were strange to me; "yet," thought I, "I have seen something like them before," but where? Oh! this I know—with its broad stripes and silken texture — it is a Navajo blanket! Where was I last? In New Mexico? Yes. Now, I remember—the Jornada! but how came I——?

"Can I untwist this? It is close woven —it is wool — fine wool. No, I cannot separate a thread from ——

"My fingers! how white and thin they are! and my nails—blue, and long as the talons of a bird! I have a beard! I feel it on my chin. What gave me a beard? I never wear it; I will shave it off—ha!—my moustache!

"The knights—how they tilt at each other! Bloody work! That bold fellow — the smaller too—will unhorse the other. I can tell from the spring of his horse, and the way he sits him. Horse and rider are the same being now. The same mind unites them by a mysterious link. The horse feels with his rider. He cannot fail to conquer charging thus.

"Those beautiful ladies! She with the hawk perched on her arm—how brilliant—how bold, yet lovely!"

I was wearied, and slept again. * *

Once more my eyes were tracing the

figures upon the curtains—the knights and dames—the hounds, hawks, and horses. But my brain had become clearer, and music was flowing into it. I lay silent, and listened.

The voice was a female's. It was soft and finely modulated. Some one played upon a stringed instrument. I recognised the tones of the Spanish harp; but the song was French—a song of Normandy; and the words were in the language of that romantic land! I wondered at this, for my consciousness of late events was returning; and I knew that I was far from France.

The light was streaming over my couch; and, turning my face to the front, I saw that the curtains were drawn aside.

I was in a large room oddly, but elegantly furnished. Human figures were before me, seated and standing. Some were reclining upon the floor—others were seated upon chairs and ottomans; and all appeared to be busy with some occupation. I thought

there were many figures—six or eight at the least. This proved to be an illusion. I found that the objects before me made duplicate impressions upon my diseased retina; and everything appeared to exist in pairs—the counterparts of each other! After looking steadily for a while, my vision became more distinct and reliable; and I saw that there were but three persons in the room—a man and two females.

I remained silent—not certain but that the scene before me was only some new phase of my dream. My eyes wandered from one of the living figures to another, without attracting the attention of any of them.

They were all in different attitudes, and occupied differently.

Nearest me was a woman of middle age, seated upon a low ottoman. The harp, I had heard, was before her; and she continued to play. She must have been, I thought, when young, a woman

of extreme beauty. She was still beautiful in a certain sense. The noble features were there, though I could perceive that they had been scathed by more than ordinary suffering of the mind. The silken surface had yielded to care as well as time.

She was a Frenchwoman—an ethnologist could have told that at a glance. Those lines—the characteristics of her highly-gifted race—were easily traceable. I thought there was a time when that face had witched many a heart with its smiles. There were no smiles on it now, but a deep yet intellectual expression of melancholy. This I perceived too in her voice—in her song—in every note that vibrated from the strings of the instrument.

My eye wandered farther. A man of more than middle age stood by the table, near the centre of the room. His face was turned towards me; and its nationality was as easily determined as that of the lady.

The high florid cheeks—the broad front—the prominent chin—the small green cap, with its long peak and conical crown—the blue spectacles—were all characteristics. He was a German. It was a face not intellectual in its expression; yet have men, with such a physiognomy, given proofs of intellectual research in every departments of science and art—research deep and wonderful; with ordinary talents and extraordinary labour. Labour Herculean that knows no wearying. Pelion piled on Ossa. I thought of this as I scanned the features of the man.

His occupation was also characteristic of his nationality. Before him were strewed over the table, and upon the floor, the objects of his study—plants and shrubs of various species. He was busy with these—classifying, and carefully laying them out between the leaves of his portfolio. It was evident that the old man was a botanist.

A glance to the right, and the naturalist and his labours were no longer regarded. I was looking upon the loveliest object that ever came before my eyes; and my heart bounded within me, as I strained forward in the intensity of its admiration. The Iris on the summer shower—the rosy dawn—the brilliant hues of the bird of Juno—are bright soft things. Blend them—blend all the beauties of nature in one harmonious whole—and there will still be wanting that mysterious essence, that enters the heart of the beholder, while gazing upon the loveliness of the female form.

Of all created things, there is none so fair—none so lovely—as a lovely woman!

Yet it was not a woman that held my gaze captive, but a child—a girl—a maid—standing upon the threshold of womanhood—ready to cross it at the first summons of Love!

Men call beauty an arbitrary thing—a

fancy,—a caprice,—a fashion—that to which we are *used.* How often do we hear this hackneyed opinion, while he, who utters it, revels in the conceit of his own wisdom? "Every eye forms its own beauty." A false and shallow sophism. We might as well declare that every tongue forms its own taste. Is honey sweet? Is wormwood bitter? Yes—in both cases—sweet, and bitter—to the child or the man—to the savage or the civilized—to the ignorant and the educated. This is true under all circumstances, unless indeed, where caprice, habit or fashion, form the *exception.* Why then deny to one sense what all the others so palpably possess? Has not the human eye, in its natural state, its likes and its dislikes? It has; and the laws that regulate them are as fixed and unerring as the orbits of the stars. We do not know these laws—but that they exist we know; and can prove it as clearly as

Leverrier determined the existence of Neptune—a world within reach of telescopic vision—yet wheeling for millions of years undetected by the sleepless sentinels of astronomy!

Why does the eye rove with delight around the outlines of the circle? along the curve of the ellipse? of every section of the cone? Why does it roam transported along the line of Hogarth? Why does it grieve when this line is broken? Ah! These are its likes and its dislikes—its sweets and its bitters—its honey and its wormwood.

Beauty, then, is not an arbitrary thing. The fancy—the conventionalism—is not in the object, but in the eye of the gazer—the eye uneducated, vulgar, or perchance distorted by fashion. Forms and colours are beautiful, independently of all opinions regarding them.

There is still a higher point which may be established in connection with this

theory — an intellectual cause can be assigned, why an object is beautiful or otherwise. Intellect has its forms and shapes in the physical world. It dwells in beauty, notwithstanding the many apparent contradictions. Ugliness, — hideous word,—must exert itself to obtain what beauty commands without an effort. Hence you see distinction—the presumptive proof of intellectual greatness—so often coupled with physical plainness. Hence the homely histrionic *artiste*—hence the female bibliographer—hence the "*blue.*" On the other hand, beauty sits enthroned like a queen or a Goddess. She makes no effort, because she feels not the necessity. The world approaches, at her slightest summons, and spreads its offerings at her feet!

These thoughts did not all pass through my mind—though some of them did—while my eyes, delighted, revelled along the graceful curves that outlined the beautiful

being before me. I thought, I had seen the face somewhere. I had—but a moment before—while looking upon that of the elder lady. They were the same face—using a figure of speech,—the type transmitted from mother to daughter. The same high front, and facial angle—the same outline of the nose, straight as a ray of light, with the delicate spiral-like curve of the nostril, which meets you in the Greek medallion. Their hair too was alike in colour, golden; though, in that of the mother, the gold showed an enamel of silver. The tresses of the girl were like sunbeams, straying over a neck and shoulders, that, for delicate whiteness, might have been chiseled from the stones of Carrara.

All this may seem high language—figurative—if you will. I can neither write nor speak otherwise on this theme. I will desist, and spare details, which, to you may be of little interest. In return, do me the

favour to believe, that the being, who impressed me then and for ever, was beautiful —was lovely.

"Ah! it wod be ver moch kindness if Madame and Ma'm'selle wod play le Marseillaise—le grand Marseillaise. What say mine lieber freilen?"

"Zoe, Zoe!" take thy bandolon. Yes, Doctor; we will play it for you with pleasure. You like the music? So do we. Come Zoe!"

The young girl, who, up to this time, had been watching intently the labours of the naturalist, glided to a remote corner of the room; and, taking up an instrument resembling the guitar, returned and seated herself by her mother. The bandolon was soon placed in concert with the harp; and the strings of both vibrated to the thrilling notes of the "Marseillaise."

There was something exceedingly graceful in the performance. The instrumenta-

tion, as I thought, was perfect; and the voices of the players accompanied it in a sweet and spirited harmony. As I gazed upon the girl Zoe—her features animated by the thrilling thoughts of the anthem—her whole countenance radiant with light—she seemed some immortal being—a young goddess of liberty, calling her children "to arms!"

The botanist had desisted from his labours; and stood listening with delighted attention. At each return of the thrilling invocation "*Aux armes, citoyens!*" the old man snapped his fingers, and beat the floor with his feet, marking the time of the music. He was filled with the same spirit, which at that time over all Europe, was gathering to its crisis!

"Where am I? French faces—French music—French voices, and the conversation in French!" for the botanist addressed the females in that language, though with a strong Rhenish *patois*, that confirmed my

first impressions of his nationality. "Where am I?"

My eye ran around the room in search of an answer. I could recognise the furniture. The cross-legged Campeachy chairs—a rebozo—the palm-leaf *petaté*—"Ha—Alp!"

The dog lay stretched along the matrass near my couch, and sleeping.

"Alp! Alp!"

"Oh! mama—mama—ecoutez! the stranger calls."

The dog sprang to his feet; and, throwing his fore-paws upon the bed, stretched his nose toward me, with a joyous whimpering. I reached out my hand, and patted him, at the same time giving utterance to some expressions of endearment.

"Oh! mama—mama! he knows him—voila!"

The lady rose hastily, and approached the bed. The German seized me by the wrist,

pushing back the San Bernard, who was bounding to spring upward.

"Mon Dieu! he is well. His eyes, Doctor. How changed!"

"Ya—ya—moch better—ver moch better. Hush—away tog! Keep away, mine goot tog!"

"Who—where—tell me, where am I—who are you?"

"Do not fear—we are friends—you have been ill."

"Yes—yes—we are friends—you have been ill, sir. Do not fear us—we will watch you. This is the good Doctor. This is mama, and I am—"

"An angel from Heaven—beautiful Zoe!"

The child looked at me with an expression of wonder; and blushed, as she said:—

"Hear mama! He knows my name!"

It was the first compliment she had ever received from the lips of love.

"It is goot, Madame—he is ver moch re-

lieft—he ver soon get over now. Keep away, mine goot Alp! Your master he get well; goot tog, down!"

"Perhaps, Doctor, we should leave him—the noise—"

"No, no! if you please stay with me—the music—will you play again?"

"Yes, the music is ver goot—ver goot for te prain."

"Oh! mama; let us play then."

Both mother and daughter, took up their instruments, and again commenced playing.

I listened to the sweet strains, watching the fair musicians a long while. My eyes at length became heavy; and the realities before me changed into the soft outlines of a dream.

* * * *

My dream, was broken by the abrupt cessation of the music. I thought I heard, through my sleep, the opening of a door. When I looked to the spot, lately occupied

by the musicians, I saw that they were gone! The bandolon had been thrown down upon the ottoman, where it lay, but *she* was not there!

I could not, from my position, see the whole of the apartment; but I knew that some one had entered at the outer door. I heard expressions of welcome and endearment—a rustling of dresses—the words "papa," "my little Zoe," the latter uttered in the voice of a man. Then followed some explanations in a lower tone, which I could not hear.

A few minutes elapsed, and I lay silent and listening. Presently, there were footsteps in the hall. A boot, with its jingling rowels, struck upon the tiled floor. The footsteps entered the room, and approached the bed. I started, as I looked up. *The Scalp-hunter was before me!*

CHAPTER XIII.

SEGUIN.

"You are better—you will soon be well again. I am glad to see that you recover."

He said this without offering his hand.

"I am indebted to you for my life. Is it not so?"

It is strange that I felt convinced of this, the moment that I set my eyes upon the man. I think such an idea crossed my mind before—after awaking from my long dream. Had I encountered him in my struggles for water? or had I dreamed it?

"Oh, yes," answered he, with a smile, "but you will remember, that I had something to do with your being exposed to the risk of losing it."

"Will you take this hand? Will you forgive me?"

After all, there is something selfish, even in gratitude. How strangely had it changed my feelings towards this man! I was begging the hand, which, but a few days before, in the pride of my morality, I had spurned from me as a loathsome thing.

But there were other thoughts that influenced me. The man before me was the husband of the lady—was the father of Zoe. His character—his horrid calling were forgotten; and, the next moment our hands were joined in the embrace of friendship!

"I have nothing to forgive. I honour the sentiment that induced you to act as you did. This declaration may seem strange to you. From what you knew of me, you acted

rightly; but there may be a time, sir, when you will know me better—when the deeds, which you abhor, may seem to you not only pardonable, but justifiable. Enough of this at present. The object of my being now at your bedside, is to request that *what you do know of me, be not uttered here!*"

His voice sank to a whisper as he said this—pointing, at the same time, towards the door of the room.

"But how," I asked, wishing to draw his attention from this unpleasant theme, "how came I in this house? It is yours, I perceive. How came I here? Where did you find me?"

"In no very safe position," answered he, with a smile. "I can scarcely claim the merit of saving you. Your noble horse you may thank for that."

"Ah! my horse—my brave Moro! I have lost him."

"Your horse is standing at the maize-

trough, not ten paces from where you lie. I think you will find him in somewhat better condition, than when you last saw him. Your mules are without. Your packs are safe. You will find them here," and he pointed to the foot of the bed."

"And ——?"

"Godé you would ask for," said he, interrupting me. "Do not be uneasy on his account. He, too, is in safety. He is absent just now, but will soon return."

"How can I thank you? This is good news indeed. My brave Moro! and Alp here! But how—you say my horse saved me. He has done so before; how can this be?"

"Simply thus. We found you, many miles from this place, on a cliff that overlooks the Del Norté. You were hanging over on your lazo, that, by a lucky accident, had become entangled around your body. One end of it was knotted to the bit-ring, and

the noble animal, thrown back on his haunches, sustained your weight upon his neck!"

"Noble Moro! what a terrible situation!"

"Aye, you may say that. Had you fallen from it, you would have passed through a thousand feet of air, before striking the rocks below. It was indeed a fearful situation."

"I must have staggered over in my search for water."

"In your delirium, you walked over. You would have done so a second time, had we not prevented you. When we drew you up on the cliff, you struggled hard to get back. You saw the water below, but not the precipice. Thirst is a terrible thing—an insanity of itself."

"I remember something of all this. I thought it had been a dream."

"Do not trouble your brain with these things. The doctor here admonishes me to leave you. I have an object, as I have

said." Here a sad expression passed over the countenance of the speaker, "else I should not have paid you this visit. I have not many moments to spare. To-night I must be far hence. In a few days I will return. Meanwhile, compose yourself, and get well. The doctor here will see that you want for nothing. My wife and daughter will nurse you."

"Thanks! thanks!"

"You will do well to remain where you are, until your friends return from Chihuahua. They will pass not far from this place; and I will warn you when they are near. You are a student. There are books here, in different languages. Amuse yourself. *They* will give you music. Monsieur, adieu!"

"Stay, sir! one moment. You seem to have taken a strange fancy to my horse?"

"Ah! monsieur, it was no fancy—but I will explain that at some other time. Perhaps the necessity no longer exists."

"Take him if you will. Another will serve my purpose."

"No, monsieur. Do you think I could rob you of what you esteem so highly, and with such just reason too. No, no. Keep the good Moro. I do not wonder at your attachment to the noble brute."

"You say that you have a long journey to-night. Then, take him for the time."

"That offer I will freely accept; for, indeed, my own horse is somewhat jaded. I have been two days in the saddle. Well—adieu!

"Seguin pressed my hand, and walked away. I heard the "chink-chink" of his spurs, as he crossed the apartment; and the next moment the door closing behind him.

I was alone; and lay listening to every sound that reached me from without. In about half an hour after he had left me, I heard the hoof-strokes of a horse, and saw the shadow of a horseman passing outside the

window. He had departed on his journey —doubtless on the performance of some red duty connected with his fearful vocation!

I lay for a while, harassed in mind, thinking of this strange man. Then sweet voices interrupted my meditations; before me appeared lovely faces; and the scalp-hunter was forgotten.

CHAPTER XIV

LOVE.

I WOULD compress the history of the ten days following into as many words. I would not weary you with the details of my love—a love that, in the short space of a few hours, became a passion deep and ardent!

I was young at the time—at just such an age as to be impressed by the romantic incidents that surrounded me, and had thrown this beautiful being in my way—at that age, when the heart, unguarded by cold calculations of the future, yields unresist-

ingly to the electrical impressions of love. I say electrical. I believe that, at this age, the sympathies that spring up between heart and heart, are purely of this nature.

At a later period of life, that power is dissipated, and divided. Reason rules it. We become conscious of the capability of transferring our affections, for they have already broken faith; and we lose that sweet confidence that comforted the loves of our youth. We are either imperious or jealous, as the advantages appear in our favour, or against us. A gross alloy enters into the love of our middle life; sadly detracting from the divinity of its character.

I might call that, I then felt, my first real passion. I thought I had loved before, but no; it was only a dream—the dream of the village schoolboy, who saw heaven in the bright eyes of his coy classmate; or perhaps, at the family pic-nic, in some romantic dell, had tasted the rosy cheek of his pretty cousin.

I grew strong; and with a rapidity that surprised the skilful man of herbs. Love fed and nourished the fire of life. The will often effects the deed, and say as you may, volition has its power upon the body. The wish to be well—to live—an object to live for, are often the speediest restoratives. They were mine.

I grew stronger, and rose from my couch. A glance at the mirror told me that my colour was returning.

Instinct teaches the bird, while wooing his mate, to plume his pinions to their highest gloss; and a similar feeling now rendered me solicitous about my toilet. My portmanteau was ransacked—my razors drawn forth—the beard disappeared from my chin—and my moustache was trimmed to its wonted dimensions.

I *confess* all this. The world had told me I was not ill-looking, and I believed what it said. I am mortal in my vanities. Are not you?

With her—Zoe—child of nature in its most perfect innocence—there were no such conceits. The trickery of the toilet never entered into her thoughts. She knew not of the graces which had been so lavishly bestowed upon her. No one had ever told her of her beauty. I had learned the strange fact, that, except her father, the old botanist, and the Pueblo peons—the servants of the house—I was the only person of my sex she had ever seen, since a very early period of her life! For years had she and her mother lived in the seclusion of their own home—a seclusion as complete as that of a convent. There was a mystery in all this; and it was only afterwards that it was revealed to me.

Hers, then, was a virgin heart—pure and spotless. A heart into whose soft dreams the light of love had not yet flung its ray—against whose holy innocence love's god had not yet winged a single arrow!

Are you of my sex? Have you ever

desired to become the lord of a heart like this? If you can answer these interrogations in the affirmative, then do I tell you—what you may well remember—that any exertions you made to attain this end were idle. You were loved at once, or never!

The *virgin* heart is not gained by the finesse of courtship. It has no half-way likings, that may yield to tender assiduity on your part. An object either attracts or repels it; and the impression is quick as the lightning's flash. It is the throwing of a die; you have won or you have won not. If the latter, you may as well desist. No effort can overcome the obstacle, and produce the emotion of love. Friendship you may gain—love never. No coquetry of yours can make that heart jealous; no favours you may bestow can cause it to love you. You may conquer worlds, yet not control its secret and silent throbbings. You may be the hero of a thousand tongues, yet he, whose image has been flung into that little

heart, will be *its* hero, higher and nobler than all others! That fair young creature, —its owner—will be wholly his, however humble, however worthless *he* may be. With her there will be no reservation, no reasoning, no caution, no cunning. She will yield alone to the mystic promptings of nature. Under their influence, she will bind her whole heart to the altar, even when she knows that *he* will make it a bleeding sacrifice!

Is it thus with the heart more matured—oft assailed? with the belle? the coquette? No. Rejected here, you need not despair. You may have qualities, *en perdu*, that will change the frown to a smile. You may do great deeds. You may achieve renown; and the scorn, that once repelled you, may become humility at your feet. Still this may be love—and strong love too—founded upon the admiration of some intellectual, or, perhaps, physical quality which you have

thus proved yourself possessed of. It is a love guided by reason, and not the mysterious instinct that rules the former. On which of these loves do men build the highest triumph? Of which are they most proud? Of the latter? Alas! no; and let Him who made us answer why; but *I never saw the man, who would not rather be beloved for the beauties of his person than the excellences of his mind!* You may blame me for this declaration. You may deny it. *It is true.* Oh! there is no joy so sweet, no triumph so thrilling, as when we have drawn to our bosom the quivering little captive, whose heart throbs with the pure pulsations of a maiden love!

These are after thoughts. I was, at the time I am writing about, too young to have reasoned thus, too little skilled in love's diplomacy; and yet, many a process of reasoning passed through my mind, and many a scheme was devised, to enable me to discover whether I was then beloved.

There was a guitar in the house. I had learnt in my college days to touch the strings, and its music delighted both Zoe and her mother. I sang to them the songs of my own land, songs of love; and with a throbbing heart watched whether the burning words produced any impression upon *her*. More than once, I have laid aside the instrument with feelings of disappointment.

From day to day, strange reflections passed through my mind. Could it be that she was too young to understand the import of the word love? too young to be inspired with a passion? She was but twelve years of age; but then she was the child of a sunny clime; and I had often seen at that age, under the warm sky of Mexico, the wedded bride, the fond mother!

Day after day, we were together alone. The botanist was busy with his studies, and the silent mother occupied with the duties of her household.

Love is not blind. It may be to all the

world beside; but to its own object it is watchful as the Argus.

* * * *

I was skilled in the use of the crayon; and I amused my companion by sketches —upon scraps of paper, and the blank leaves of her music. Many of these were the figures of females, in different attitudes and costumes. In one respect they resembled each other—their faces were alike!

The child, without divining the cause, had noticed this peculiarity in the drawings.

"Why is it?" she asked one day, as we sat together. "These ladies are all in different costumes—of different nations, are they not?—and yet there is a resemblance in their faces! They have all the same features; indeed, exactly the same, I think."

"It is *your* face, Zoe. I can sketch no other."

She raised her large eyes, and bent them upon me with an expression of innocent wonder. Was she blushing? No!

"Is that like me?"

"It is, as nearly as I can make it."

"And why do you not sketch other faces?"

"Why! because I—Zoe, I fear you would not understand me."

"Oh! Enrique, do you think me so bad a scholar? Do I not understand all that you tell me of the far countries where you have been? Surely I may comprehend this as well?"

"I will tell you, then, Zoe."

I bent forward, with a burning heart and trembling voice.

"It is because—your face is ever before me—I can paint no other. It is—that—*I love you, Zoe.*"

"Oh! is that the reason? And when you love one, their face is always before you, whether they themselves be present or no? is it not so?"

"It is so," I replied, with a painful feeling of disappointment.

"And is that love, Enrique?"

"It is."

"Then must *I* love *you;* for, wherever I may be, I can see your face — how plainly, before me! If I could use this pencil as you, I am sure I could paint it, though you were not near me! What then? Do you think *I* love *you*, Enrique?"

No pen could trace my feelings at that moment. We were seated; and the sheet, on which were the sketches, was held jointly between us. My hand wandered over its surface, until the unresisting fingers of my companion were clasped in mine. A wilder emotion followed the electric touch—the paper fell upon the floor—and with a proud, but trembling heart, I drew the yielding form to mine!

There was no resistance. Our lips met in the first kiss—a kiss of reciprocal love. I felt her heart throb and flutter, as she lay upon my breast. O joy! joy! *I was the lord of that little heart!*

* * *

CHAPTER XV.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE house we inhabited stood in a quadrangular enclosure that sloped down to the banks of the river,—the Del Norté. This enclosure was a garden, or shrubbery, guarded on all sides by high thick walls of *adobé*. Along the summit of these walls had been planted rows of the cactus, that threw out huge thorny limbs, forming an impassable *chevaux de frise*. There was but one entrance to the house and garden, through a strong wicket gate—which, I had

noticed, was always shut and barred. I had no desire to go abroad. The garden—a large one—hitherto had formed the limit of my walk; and through this, I often rambled with Zoe and her mother; but oftener with Zoe alone.

There were many objects of interest about the place. It was a ruin; and the house itself bore evidence of better times. It was a large building in the Moro-Spanish style, with flat roof (azotea), and notched parapet running along the front. Here and there the little stone turrets of this parapet had fallen off, exhibiting evidence of neglect and decay.

The garden bore these symptoms throughout its whole extent; at the same time, in its ruins you might read ample testimony of the great care that had once been bestowed upon it. Crumbling statues, —dry fountains,—ruined arbours,—weed-grown walks—attested its former grandeur

—its present neglect. There were many trees of singular and exotic species; but there was a wildness in the appearance of their fruit and foliage; and they had grown into thickets, interlacing each other. There was a free beauty however, in this very wildness, that charmed one; and the sense was further delighted, with the aroma of a thousand flowers, that continually floated upon the air.

The walls of the garden impinged upon the river, and there ended; for the bank was steep and vertical; and the deep still water that ran under it, formed a sufficient protection on that side.

A thick grove of cotton woods fringed the bank of the river; and under their shade had been erected a number of seats of japanned mason-work, in a style peculiar to Spanish countries. There were steps cut in the face of the bank, overhung with drooping shrubs, and leading to the water's edge.

I had noticed a small skiff moored under the willows, where these steps went down to the water.

From this point only, could you see beyond the limits of the enclosure. The view was magnificent, and commanded the winding of the Del Norté for a distance of miles.

The country outside seemed wild and uninhabited. Nearly as far as the eye could range, the beautiful frondage of the cotton-wood groves covered the landscape, and cast its soft shadows on the river. Southward, away near the horizon's edge, a single spire glanced over the tops of the trees. This was the church of El Paso del Norté, whose vine-clad hills could be seen rising against the distant background of the sky. Along the east towered the Rocky Mountains—the mysterious chain of the Organos, whose dark summit lake, with its ebbing tides, inspires the lone hunter with a superstitious terror. To the west, low down and dimly

seen, were the twin ranges of the Mimbres, —those mountains of gold—whose desert passes rarely echo the tread of a human foot. Even the reckless trapper turns aside, when he approaches that unknown land, that stretches northward from the Gila—the land of the Apaché, and the cannibal Navajo! * * * *

Evening after evening, we sought the grove of cottonwoods; and, seated upon one of the benches, together watched the glowing sunset. At this time of the day we were ever alone—I and my little companion.

I have called her my little companion, though I thought at this time, that she had suddenly grown to a larger stature, assuming the form and outlines of a woman! In my eyes, she was a child no longer. Her form had become more developed—her bosom rose higher in its gentle undulations—and her movements appeared to me, womanlike and commanding. Her

colour too seemed heightened; and a radiant brilliance sported over her features. The love-light, streaming from her large brown eyes, added to their liquid lustre. There was a change of mind and body. It was the mystic transformation of love. She was under the influence of its god!

* * * *

One evening, as usual, we sat under the solemn shadow of the grove. We had brought with us the guitar and bandolon; but, after a few notes had been struck, the music was forgotten; and the instruments lay upon the grass at our feet. We loved to listen to the music of our own voices. We preferred the utterance of our own thoughts, to the sentiments of any song, however sweet. There was music enough around us—the hum of the wild bee as it bid farewell to the closing corolla—the "whoop" of the gruya in the distant sedge, and the soft cooing of the doves as they sat in pairs

upon the adjacent branches—like us whispering their mutual loves.

Autumn had now painted the woods, and the frondage was of every hue. The shadows of the tall trees dappled the surface of the water, as the stream rolled silently on. The sun was far down, and the spire of El Paso gleamed like a golden star, under the parting kiss of his beams. Our eyes wandered, and rested upon the glittering vane.

"The church!" half soliloquized my companion, "I hardly know what it is like—it is so long since I saw it."

"How long?"

"Oh! many—many years—I was very young then."

"And you have not been beyond these walls since then?"

"Oh! yes. Papa has taken us down the river in the boat—mama and myself—often—but not lately."

"And have you no wish to go abroad through those gay woods?"

"I do not desire it—I am contented here."

"But will you always be contented here?'

"And why not, Enrique? When you are near me, why should I not be happy?"

"But when—"

A dark shadow seemed to cross her thoughts. Benighted with love, she had never reflected on the probability of my leaving her; nor indeed had I. Her cheeks became suddenly pale; and I could see the agony gathering in her eyes, as she fixed them upon me. But the words were out.

"—when I must leave you?"

She threw herself on my breast with a short sharp scream, as though she had been stung to the heart; and in an impassioned voice, cried aloud:

"Oh! my God—my God! leave me? leave me? O, you will not leave me? You

who have *taught me to love!* O Enrique! why did you tell me that you loved me? Why did you *teach me to love?*"

"Zoe!"

"Enrique—Enrique! say you will not leave me?"

"Never! Zoe—I swear it—never—never!"

I fancied at this moment I heard the stroke of an oar; but the wild tumult of my feelings, and the close embrace of my betrothed—who in the transport of reaction had twined her arms around me—prevented me from rising to look over the bank. It was the plunge of the osprey, thought I; and dismissing the thought, I yielded myself to the long and rapturous kiss. I was raising my head again, when an object, appearing above the bank, caught my eye. It was a black sombrero with its golden band. I knew the wearer at a glance—Seguin!

In a moment, he was beside us.

"Papa!" exclaimed Zoe, rising up and reaching forward to embrace him.

The father put her to one side—at the same time tightly grasping her hand in his. For a moment he remained silent, bending his eyes upon me with an expression I cannot depict. There was in it a mixture of reproach, sorrow, and indignation. I had risen to confront him, but I quailed under that singular glance, and stood abashed and silent.

"And this is the way you have thanked me for saving your life? A brave return, good sir—what think you?"

I made no reply.

"Sir!" continued he, in a voice trembling with emotion, "you have deeply wronged me."

"I know it not; I have *not* wronged you."

"What call you this? trifling with my child!"

"Trifling!" I exclaimed, roused to boldness by the accusation.

"Aye, trifling! Have you not won her affections?"

"I won them fairly."

"Pshaw! sir. This is a child, not a woman. Won them fairly! What can she know of love?"

"Papa! I do know love. I have felt it for many days. Do not be angry with Enrique, for I love him—O papa—in my heart, I love him!"

He turned to her, with a look of astonishment.

"Hear this!" he exclaimed, "O God! my child—my child!"

His voice stung me, for it was full of sorrow.

"Listen, sir," I cried, placing myself directly before him. "I have won the affections of your daughter. I have given mine in return. I am her equal in rank, as

she is mine. What crime then have I committed? Wherein have I wronged you?"

He looked at me for some moments without making any reply.

"You would marry her, then?" he said at length, with an evident change in his manner.

"Had I permitted our love thus far, without that intention, I should have merited your reproaches. I should have been 'trifling' as you have said."

"Marry me!" exclaimed Zoe, with a look of bewilderment.

"Listen! poor child! she knows not the meaning of the word!"

"Aye, lovely Zoe, I will; else my heart, like yours, will be wrecked for ever—O sir—"

"Come, sir, enough of this. You have won her from herself—you have yet to win her from *me*. I will sound the depth of your affection. I will put you to the proof—"

"Put me to any proof!"

"We shall see—come! let us in. Here, Zoe!"

And, taking her by the hand, he led her toward the house. I followed close behind.

As we passed through a clump of wild orange trees, the path narrowed; and the father, letting go her hand, walked on ahead. Zoe was between us; and as we reached the middle of the grove, she turned suddenly; and, laying her hand upon mine, whispered in a trembling voice; "Enrique—tell me—what is '*to marry?*'"

"Dearest Zoe! not now—it is too difficult to explain—another time—I—"

"Come, Zoe! your hand, child!"

"Papa, I am coming!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I WAS alone with my host in the apartment I had hitherto occupied. The females had retired to another part of the house; and I noticed that Seguin, on entering, had looked to the door—turning the bolt!

What terrible proof was he going to exact of my faith—of my love? Was he about to take my life? Or bind me by some fearful oath—this man of cruel deeds? Dark suspicions shot across my mind; and I sat silent, but not without emotions of fear.

A bottle of wine was placed between us; and Seguin, pouring out two glasses, asked me to drink. This courtesy assured me. "But how if the wine be poi—?" He swallowed his own glass, before the thought had fairly shaped itself.

"I am wronging him," thought I. "This man, with all, is incapable of an act of treachery like that."

I drank up the wine. It made me feel more composed and tranquil.

After a moment's silence, he opened the conversation with the abrupt interrogatory:

"What do you know of me?"

"Your name and calling; nothing more."

"More than is guessed at here;" and he pointed significantly to the door. "Who told you thus much of me?"

"A friend, whom you saw in Santa Fé."

"Ah! St. Vrain; a brave, bold man. I met him once in Chihuahua. Did he tell you no more of me than this?"

"No. He promised to enter into parti-

culars concerning you, but the subject was forgotten—the caravan moved on, and we were separated."

"You heard, then, that I was—Seguin—the scalp-hunter? that I was employed by the citizens of El Paso to hunt the Apaché and Navajo? and that I was paid a stated sum for every Indian scalp I could hang upon their gates? You heard all this?"

"I did."

"It is true."

I remained silent.

"Now sir," he continued, after a pause. "Would you marry *my* daughter—the child of a wholesale murderer?"

"Your crimes are not hers. She is innocent, even of the knowledge of them, as you have said. You may be a demon; *she* is an angel."

There was a sad expression on his countenance, as I said this.

"Crimes—demon"—he muttered, half in soliloquy. "Aye, you may well think this—

so judges the world. You have heard the stories of the mountain men in all their red exaggeration. You have heard that, during a treaty, I invited a village of the Apaché to a banquet, and poisoned the viands—poisoned the guests, man, woman, and child —and then scalped them! You have heard that I induced—to pull upon the drag-rope of a cannon—two hundred savages, who knew not its uses; and then fired the piece, loaded with grape, mowing down the row of unsuspecting wretches! These, and other inhuman acts, you have no doubt heard of?"

"It is true. I have heard these stories among the mountain hunters; but I knew not whether to believe them."

"Monsieur, they are false,—all false and unfounded."

"I am glad to hear you say this. I could not *now* believe you capable of such barbarities."

"And yet, if they *were* true, in all their horrid details, they would fall far short of

the cruelties that have been dealt out by the savage foe to the inhabitants of this defenceless frontier. If you knew the history of this land for the last ten years; its massacres and its murders; its tears and its burnings; its rapes and spoliations; whole provinces depopulated; villages given to the flames; men butchered on their own hearths; women—beautiful women—carried into captivity to satisfy the lust of the desert robber. Oh God! and I too have shared wrongs that will acquit me in your eyes, perhaps in the eyes of Heaven!"

The speaker buried his face in his hands, and leant forward upon the table. He was evidently suffering from some painful recollection. After a moment he resumed.

"I would have you listen to a short history of my life."

I signified my assent; and after filling and drinking another glass of wine, he proceeded.

"I am not a Frenchman, as men suppose. I am a Creole,—a native of New Orleans.

My parents were refugees from St. Domingo; where, after the black revolution, the bulk of their fortune was confiscated by the bloody Christophe.

"I was educated for a civil engineer; and, in this capacity, I was brought out to the mines of Mexico, by the owner of one of them, who knew my father. I was young at the time; and I spent several years employed in the mines of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosi.

"I had saved some money out of my pay; and I began to think of opening upon my own account.

"Rumours had long been current that rich veins of gold existed upon the Gila, and its tributaries. The washings had been seen, and gathered in these rivers; and the mother of gold,—the milky quartz-rock cropped out every where in the desert mountains of this wild region.

"I started for this country with a select party; and, after traversing it for weeks, in

the Mimbres mountains, near the head waters of the Gila, I found the precious ore in its bed. I established a mine; and in five years was a rich man.

"I remembered the companion of my youth —the gentle, the beautiful cousin, who had shared my confidence, and inspired me with my first passion. With me, it was first and last; it was not, as is often the case under similar circumstances, a transient thing. Through all my wanderings I had remembered and loved her. Had she been as true to me?

"I determined to assure myself; and, leaving my affairs in the hands of my *mayoral*, I set out for my native city.

"Adele had been true; and I returned, bringing her with me.

"I built a house in Valverde—the nearest inhabited district to my mine.

"Valverde was then a thriving place—it is now a ruin, which you may have seen in your journey down.

"In this place we lived for years, in the enjoyment of wealth, and happiness. I look back upon these days as so many ages of bliss. Our love was mutual, and ardent; and we were blessed with two children, both girls. The youngest resembled her mother—the other, I have been told, was more like myself. We doted, I fear too much, on these pledges. We were too happy in their possession.

"At this time a new governor was sent to Santa Fé; a man who—by his wantonness and tyranny—has, since then, ruined the province. There has been no act too vile, no crime too dark for this human monster.

"He offered fair enough at first; and was feasted in the houses of the *ricos* through the valley. As I was classed among these, I was honoured with his visits, and frequently. He resided principally at Albuquerque; and grand fêtes were given at his palace, to which my wife and I were invited

as special guests. He in return often came to our house in Valverde, under pretence of visiting the different parts of the province.

"I discovered, at length, that his visits were solely intended for my wife—to whom he had paid some flattering attentions.

"I will not dwell on the beauty of Adele, at this time. You may imagine that for yourself; and, Monsieur, you may assist your imagination, by allowing it to dwell on those graces, you appear to have discovered in her daughter; for the little Zoe is a type of what her mother was.

"At the time I speak of, she was still in the bloom of her beauty. The fame of that beauty was on every tongue; and had piqued the vanity of the wanton tyrant. For this reason I became the object of his friendly assiduities.

"I had divined this; but confiding in the virtue of my wife, I took no notice of his conduct. No overt act of insult as yet claimed my attention.

"Returning on one occasion from a long absence at the mines, Adele informed me, what, through delicacy, she had hitherto concealed, of insults received from his Excellency at various times, but particularly in a visit he had paid her during my absence.

"This was enough for Creole blood. I paired to Albuquerque; and on the public plazza, in presence of the multitude, I chastised the insulter.

"I was seized and thrown into a prison, where I lay for several weeks. When I was freed, and sought my home again, it was plundered and desolate! The wild Navajo had been there—my household gods were scattered and broken—and my child, O God! my little Adele, was carried captive to the mountains!"

"And your wife?—your other child?" I inquired, eager to know the rest.

"They had escaped. In the terrible conflict—for my poor peons battled bravely—my wife, with Zoe in her arms, had rushed out,

and hidden in a cave that was in the garden. I found them in the ranche of a vaquero in the woods—whither they had wandered."

"And your daughter Adele—have you heard aught of her since?"

"Yes—yes—I will come to that in a moment.

"My mine, at the same time, was plundered and destroyed; many of the workmen were slaughtered before they could escape; and the work itself, with my fortune, became a ruin.

"With some of the miners, who had fled, and others of Velverde, who—like me—had suffered, I organised a band, and followed the savage foe; but our pursuit was vain; and we turned back, many of us broken in health and heart.

"Oh! Monsieur, you cannot know what it is to have thus lost a favourite child! you cannot understand the agony of the bereaved father!"

The speaker pressed his head between his hands, and remained for a moment silent. His countenance bore the indications of heart-rending sorrow.

"My story will soon be told up to the present time. Who knows the end?

"For years, I hung upon the frontiers of the Indian country *hunting* for my child. I was aided by a small band, most of them unfortunates like myself, who had lost wife or daughter in a similar manner. But our means became exhausted, and despair wore us out. The sympathies of my companions grew old and cold. One after another gave up. The government of New Mexico offered us no aid. On the contrary, it was suspected then—it is now known—that the governor himself was in secret league with the Navajo chiefs. He was to leave them unmolested; while they, on their side, promised to plunder *only his enemies!*

"On learning this terrible secret, I saw

the hand that had dealt me the blow. Stung by the disgrace I had put upon him, as well as by my wife's scorn, the villain was not slow to avenge himself.

"Since then, his life has been twice in my power; but the taking of it would, most probably, have forfeited my own; and I had objects for which to live. I may yet find a reckoning day for him.

"I have said that my band melted away. Sick at heart, and conscious of danger in New Mexico, I left the province, and crossed the Jornada to El Paso. Here for a while I lived, grieving for my lost child.

"I was not long inactive. The frequent forays made by the Apachés into Sonora and Chihuahua had rendered the government more energetic in the defence of the frontier. The *presidios* were repaired and garrisoned with more efficient troops; and a band of rangers organised, whose pay was proportioned to the number of scalps they might send back to the settlements!

"I was offered the command of this strange guerilla; and in the hope that I might yet recover my child, I accepted it—I became a scalp-hunter!

"It was a terrible commission; and had revenge alone been my object, it would long since have been gratified. Many a deed of blood have we enacted—many a scene of retaliatory vengeance have we passed through.

"I knew that my captive daughter was in the hands of the Navajoes. I had heard so at various times, from prisoners whom I had taken; but I was always crippled for want of strength in men and means. Revolution after revolution kept the States in poverty and civil warfare; and our interests were neglected or forgotten. With all my exertions, I could never raise a force sufficient to penetrate that desert country north of the Gila, in which lie the towns of the savage Navajoes."

"And you think ——."

"Patience! I shall soon finish. My band is now stronger than ever. I have received certain information, by one just escaped from a captivity among the Navajoes—that the warriors of both tribes are about to proceed southward. They are mustering all their strength, with the intention of making a grand foray—even, as we have heard, to the gates of Durango. It is my design, then, to enter their country while they are absent, and search for my daughter."

"And you think she still lives?"

"I know it. The same who brought me this news—and who, poor fellow! has left his scalp and ears behind him—saw her often. She is grown up; and is, he says, a sort of queen among them; possessed of strange powers and privileges. Yes—she still lives; and if it be my fortune to recover her, then will this tragic scene be at end. I will go far hence."

I had listened with deep attention to the strange recital. All the disgust, with which my previous knowledge of this man's character had inspired me, vanished from my mind; and I felt for him compassion—aye, admiration. He had suffered much. Suffering atones for crime; and, in my sight, he was justified. Perhaps I was too lenient in my judgment. It was natural I should be so.

When the revelation was ended, I was filled with emotions of pleasure. I felt a vivid joy to know, that *she* was not the offspring of the demon I had deemed him.

He seemed to divine my thoughts, for there was a smile of satisfaction—I might say triumph—on his countenance, as he leaned across the table to refill the wine.

"Monsieur, my story must have wearied you. Drink!"

There was a moment's silence, as we emptied the glasses.

"And now, sir, you know the father of

your betrothed—at least somewhat better than before. Are you still in the mind to marry her?"

"O, sir! she is now, more than ever, to me a sacred object."

"But you must win her—as I have said—from me."

"Then, sir, tell me how. I am ready for any sacrifice that may be within my power to make."

"You must help me to recover her sister."

"Willingly."

"You must go with me to the Desert?"

"I will."

"Enough. We start to-morrow." And he rose, and began to pace the room.

"At an early hour?" I inquired, half fearing that I was about to be denied an interview with her, whom I now more than ever longed to embrace."

"By daybreak," he replied, not seeming to heed my anxious manner.

"I must look to my horse and arms," said I, rising and going towards the door, in hopes of meeting her without.

"They have been attended to—Godé is there. Come, boy! She is not in the hall. Stay where you are. I will get the arms you want. Adele! Zoe! O, Doctor, you are returned with your weeds? It is well. We journey to-morrow. Adele, some coffee, love! and then let us have some music. Your guest leaves you to-morrow."

The bright form rushed between us with a scream!

"No—no—no—no!" she exclaimed, turning from one to the other, with the wild appeal of a passionate heart.

"Come, little dove," said the father, taking her by the hands, "do not be so easily fluttered. It is but for a short time. He will return again."

"How long, papa? How long, Enrique?"

"But a very short while. It will be longer to me, than to you, Zoe."

"Oh! no—no; an hour will be a long time. How many hours do you think, Enrique?"

"Oh! We shall be gone days, I fear."

"Days! O papa! O Enrique! days!"

"Come, little chit—they will soon pass. Go! Help your mama to make the coffee."

"O papa! days—long days—they will not soon pass when I am alone."

"But you will not be alone. Your mama will be with you."

"Ah!"

And with a sigh, and an air of abstraction, she departed to obey the command of her father. As she passed out at the door, she again sighed audibly.

The doctor was a silent and wondering spectator to this last scene; and as her figure vanished into the hall, I could hear him muttering to himself;

"O ja! Poor leetle freilen! I thot as mosh."

CHAPTER XVIII.

UP THE DEL NORTÉ.

I WILL not distress you with a parting scene. We were in our saddles before the stars had died out, and riding along the sandy road.

At a short distance from the house, the path angled, striking into thick, heavy timber. Here I checked my horse, allowing my companions to pass; and, standing in the stirrup, looked back. My eye wandered along the old grey walls, and sought the *azotea*. Upon the very edge of the

parapet, outlined against the pale light of the aurora, was the object I looked for. I could not distinguish the features, but I easily recognised the oval curvings of the figure, cut like a dark medallion against the sky.

She was standing near one of the *yucca* palm trees that grew up from the azotea. Her hand rested upon its trunk, and she bent forward, straining her gaze into the darkness below. Perhaps she saw the waving of a kerchief—perhaps she heard her name, and echoed the parting prayer that was sent back to her on the still breath of the morning. If so, her voice was drowned by the tread of my chafing horse, that, wheeling suddenly, bore me off into the sombre shadows of the forest.

I rode forward, turning at intervals to catch a glimpse of those lovely outlines, but from no other point was the houes visible. It lay buried in the dark majestic woods.

I could only see the long bayonets of the picturesque palmillas; and our road now descending among hills, these too were soon hidden from my view.

Dropping the bridle, and leaving my horse to go at will, I fell into a train of thoughts at once pleasant and painful.

I knew that I had imbibed the *love of my life*—that henceforward in it all my hopes would centre, and from it would spring my highest motives. I had just reached manhood; and I was not ignorant of the truth, that a pure love like this is the best guide to our too-erring natures—the best rein to curb their wild wanderings. I was indebted for this knowledge to him who had taught me my earliest lessons; and as his experience had already more than once stood me in stead, I believed him in this. I have since proved the teaching true.

I knew that I had inspired this young creature with a passion deep and ardent as

my own—perhaps more vital; for *my* heart had passed through other affections, while *hers* had never throbbed with any, save the subdued solicitudes of a graceful childhood. She had never known emotion. Love was her first strong feeling—her first passion. Would it not, thus enthroned, reign over all other thoughts in her heart's kingdom? She, too, so formed for love—so like its mythic goddess!

These reflections were pleasant. But the picture darkened, as I turned from looking back for the last time; and something whispered me—some demon it was—"You may never see her more."

The suggestion, even in this hypothetical form, was enough to fill my mind with dark forebodings; and I began to cast my thoughts upon the future. I was going upon no party of pleasure, from which I might return at a fixed hour. Dangers were before me—the dangers of the Desert; and I knew

that these were of no ordinary character. In our plans of the previous night, Seguin had not concealed the perils of our expedition. These he had detailed, before exacting my final promise to accompany him. Weeks before, I would not have regarded them. They would only have lured me on to meet them. Now, my feelings were different, for I believed that in *my* life, there was another's. What then if the demon has whispered truly? I may never see her more! It was a painful thought; and I rode on, bent in the saddle, under the influence of its bitterness.

But I was once more upon the back of my favourite Moro, who seemed to "know his rider;" and as his elastic body heaved beneath me, *my* spirit answered his, and began to resume its wonted buoyancy.

After a while, I took up the reins; and, shortening them in my hands, spurred on after my companions.

Our road lay up the river, crossing the shallow ford at intervals, and winding through the bottom-lands, that were heavily timbered. The path was difficult on account of the thick underwood; and although the trees had once been "blazed" for a road, there were no signs of late travel upon it, with the exception of a few solitary horse-tracks. The country appeared wild and uninhabited. This was evident, from the frequency with which deer and antelope swept across our path, or sprang out of the underwood close to our horses' heads. Here and there, our path trended away from the river, crossing its numerous "loops." Several times we passed large tracts where the heavy timber had been felled and "clearings" had existed. But this must have been long ago, for the land, that had been furrowed by the plough, was now covered with tangled and almost impenetrable thickets. A few broken and decaying logs, or crumbling walls of the *adobé*,

were all that remained to attest where the settlers' "rancho" had stood.

We passed a ruined church, with its old turrets dropping by piecemeal. Piles of *adobé* lay around, covering the ground for acres. A thriving village had stood here. Where was it now? Where were the busy gossips? A wild cat sprang over the briar-laced walls; and made off into the forest. An owl flew sluggishly up from the crumbling cupola, and hovered around our heads —uttering its doleful "woo-hoo-a," that rendered the desolation of the scene more impressive. As we rode through the ruin a dead stillness surrounded us, broken only by the hooting of the night-bird, and the "cranch-cranch" of our horses' feet upon the fragments of pottery that covered the deserted streets.

But where were they who had once made these walls echo with their voices? Who had knelt under the sacred shadow of that

once hallowed pile? They were gone; but where? and when? and why?

I put these questions to Seguin; and was answered thus briefly:

"The Indians."

The savage it was, with his red spear, and scalping-knife—his bow and his battle-axe—his brand, and his poisoned arrows.

"The Navajoes?" I inquired.

"Navajo and Apaché."

"But do they come no more to this place?"

A feeling of anxiety had suddenly entered my mind. I thought of our proximity to the mansion we had left. I thought of its unguarded walls. I waited with some impatience for an answer.

"No more," was the brief reply.

"And why?" I inquired.

"This is *our* territory;" he answered significantly." You are now, Monsieur, in a country where live strange fellows,—you

shall see. Woe to the Apaché, or Navajo, who may stray into these woods!"

As we rode forward, the country became more open; and we caught a glimpse of high bluffs trending north and south on both sides of the river. These bluffs converged, till the river channel appeared to be completely barred up by a mountain! This was only an appearance. On riding farther, we found ourselves entering one of those fearful gaps—*cañons* as they are called—so often met with in the table lands of tropical America.

Through this the river foamed, between two vast cliffs a thousand feet in height—whose profiles, as you approached them, suggested the idea of angry giants, separated by some almighty hand, and thus left frowning at each other! It was with a feeling of awe that one looked up the face of these stupendous cliffs, and I felt a shuddering sensation, as I neared the mighty gate between them.

"Do you see that point?" asked Seguin, indicating a rock that jutted out from the highest ledge of the chasm. I signified in the affirmative, for the question was addressed to myself.

"That is the leap you were so desirous of taking. We found you dangling against yonder rock."

"Good God!" I ejaculated, as my eyes rested upon the dizzy eminence. My brain grew giddy, as I sat in my saddle, gazing upward; and I was fain to ride onward.

"But for your noble horse," continued my companion; "the doctor here would have been stopping about this time to hypothecate upon your bones. Ho! Moro! beautiful Moro!"

"Oh! mein Got! Ya, ya!" assented the botanist, looking up against the precipice with apparently a feeling of awe, such as I felt myself.

Seguin had ridden alongside me, and was

patting my horse on the neck, with expressions of admiration.

"But why?" I asked, the remembrance of our first interview now occurring to me, "why were you so eager to possess him?"

"A fancy."

"Can I not understand it? I think you said then that I could not?"

"O yes, quite easily, Monsieur. I intended to steal my own daughter; and I wanted, for that purpose, to have the aid of your horse."

"But how?"

"It was before I had heard the news of this intended expedition of our enemy. As I had no hopes of obtaining her otherwise, it was my design to have entered their country alone, or with a tried comrade, and by stratagem to have carried her off. Their horses are swift, yet far inferior to the Arab, as you may have an opportunity of seeing. With such an animal as that, I would have been comparatively safe, unless hemmed in or

surrounded; and even then I might have got off with a few scratches. I intended to have disguised myself, and entered their town as one of their own warriors. I have long been master of their language."

"It would have been a perilous enterprise."

"True—it was a *dernier resort;* and only adopted because all other efforts had failed—after years of yearning, deep-craving of the heart. I might have perished. It was a rash thought; but I, at that time, entertained it fully."

"I hope we will succeed now."

"I have high hopes. It seems as if some overruling providence was now acting in my favour. This absence of her captors—and besides, my band has been most opportunely strengthened, by the arrival of a number of trappers from the eastern plains. The beaver skins have fallen according to their phraseology, to a 'plew a plug;' and

they find 'red-skin' pays better. Ah! I hope this will soon be over."

And he sighed deeply as he uttered the last words.

We were now at the entrance of the gorge, and a shady clump of cottonwoods invited us to rest.

"Let us noon here," said Seguin.

We dismounted, and ran our animals out on their trailropes to feed. Then, seating ourselves on the soft grass, we drew forth the viands that had been prepared for our journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.

We rested above an hour in the cool shade, while our horses refreshed themselves on the "grama" that grew luxuriantly around. We conversed about the singular region in which we were travelling—singular in its geography, its geology, its botany and its history—singular in all respects.

I am a traveller, as I might say, by profession. I felt an interest in learning something of the wild countries that stretched for hundreds of miles around us; and I

knew there was no man living so capable of being my informant, as him with whom I then conversed.

My journey down the river had made me but little acquainted with its features. At that time as I have already related, there was fever upon me; and my memory of objects was as though I had encountered them in some distorted dream.

My brain was now clear; and the scenes through which we were passing—here soft and south-like,—there wild, barren, and picturesque—forcibly impressed my imagination. The knowledge, too, that parts of this region had once been inhabited by the followers of Cortez—as many a ruin testified—that it had been surrendered back to its ancient and savage lords—and the inference that this surrender had been brought about by the enactment of many a tragic scene—induced a train of romantic thought, which yearned for gratification in a knowledge of the realities that gave rise to it.

Seguin was communicative. His spirits were high. His hopes were buoyant. The prospect of again embracing his long-lost child imbued him, as it were, with new life. He had not, he said, felt so happy for many years.

"It is true," said he, in answer to a question I had put, "there is little known of this whole region, beyond the boundaries of the Mexican settlements. They who once had the opportunity of recording its geographical features, have left the task undone. They were too busy in the search for gold; and their weak descendants, as you see, are too busy in robbing one another to care for aught else. They know nothing of the country beyond their own borders; and these are every day contracting upon them. All they know of it is the fact that thence come their enemies, whom they dread, as children do ghosts or wolves.

"They are now," continued Seguin, "near

the centre of the continent—in the very heart of the American Saara."

"But," said I, interrupting him, "we cannot be more than a day's ride south of New Mexico—that is not a desert—it is a cultivated country?"

"New Mexico is an oasis—nothing more. The desert is around it for hundreds of miles—nay, in some directions you may travel a thousand miles from the Del Norté without seeing one fertile spot. New Mexico is an oasis, which owes its existence to the irrigating waters of the Del Norté. It is the only settlement of white men, from the frontiers of the Mississippi to the shores of the Pacific in California. You approached it by a desert, did you not?"

"Yes. As we ascended from the Mississippi towards the Rocky Mountains, the country became gradually more sterile. For the last three hundred miles or so, we could scarcely find grass or water for the

sustenance of our animals. But is it thus north and south of the route we travelled?"

"North and south for more than a thousand miles—from the plains of Texas to the lakes of Canada, along the whole base of the Rocky Mountains—and half way to the settlements on the Mississippi. It is a treeless, herbless land."

"To the west of the mountains?"

"Fifteen hundred miles of desert—that is its length, by at least half as many miles of breadth. The country to the west is of a different character. It is more broken in its outlines, more mountainous, and, if possible, more sterile in its aspect. The volcanic fires have been more active there; and though that may have been thousands of years ago, the igneous rocks in many places look as if freshly upheaved. No vegetation—no climatic action has sensibly changed the hues of the lava and scoriæ that in some places cover the plains for miles. I say no

climatic action, for there is but little of that in this central region."

"I do not understand you."

"What I mean is, that there is but little atmospheric change. It is one uniform drought; it seldom storms or rains. I know some districts where a drop of rain has not fallen for years."

"And can you account for that phenomenon?"

"I have my theory. It may not satisfy the learned meteorologist, but I will offer it to you."

I listened with attention, for I knew that my companion was a man of science, as of experience and observation; and subjects, of the character of those about which we conversed, had always possessed great interest for me. He continued:

"There can be no rain without vapour in the air. There can be no vapour in the air, without water on the earth below to pro-

duce it. Here there is no great body of water.

"Nor can there be. The whole region of the desert is upheaved—an elevated table-land. We are now nearly 6,000 feet above sea level. Hence its springs are few; and, by hydraulic law, must be fed by its own waters, or those of some region still more elevated, which does not exist on the continent.

"Could I create vast seas in this region, walled in by the lofty mountains that traverse it—and such seas existed consequent to its formation—could I create those seas, without giving them an outlet, not even allowing the smallest rill to drain them—in process of time, they would empty themselves into the ocean, and leave every thing as it now is—a desert."

"But how? by evaporation?"

"On the contrary, the absence of evaporation would be the cause of their drainage! I believe it has been so."

"I cannot understand that."

"It is simply thus. This region possesses, as we have said, great elevation; consequently a cool atmosphere, and a much less evaporating power than that which draws up the water of the ocean. Now there would be an interchange of vapour between the ocean, and these elevated seas, by means of winds and currents—for it is only by that means that any water can reach this interior plateau. That interchange would result in favour of the inland seas, by reason of their less evaporation, as well as from other causes. We have not time, or I could demonstrate such a result. I beg you will admit it, then; and reason it out at your leisure."

"I perceive the truth: I perceive it at once."

"What follows, then? These seas would gradually fill up to overflowing. The first little rivulet, that trickled forth from their lipping fulness, would be the signal of their

destruction. It would cut its channel over the ridge of the lofty mountain, tiny at first, but deepening and widening with each successive shower, until, after many years—ages, centuries, cycles perhaps—a great gap, such as this—" here Seguin pointed to the *Cañon*, "and the dry plain behind it, would alone exist to puzzle the geologist."

"And you think that the plains lying among the Andes and the Rocky Mountains, are the dry beds of seas?"

"I doubt it not. Seas formed after the upheaval of the ridges that barred them in—formed by rains from the ocean—at first shallow; then deepening, until they had risen to the level of their mountain barriers; and, as I have described, cut their way back again to the ocean."

"But does not one of these seas still exist?"

"The great Salt Lake—it does. It lies north-west of us. Not only one, but a

system of lakes, springs, and rivers—both salt and fresh—and these have no outlet to the ocean! They are barred in by highlands and mountains of themselves, forming a complete geographical system."

"Does not that destroy your theory?"

"No. The basin, in which this phenomenon exists, is on a lower level than most of the desert plateaus. Its evaporating power is equal to the influx of its own rivers; and, consequently, neutralises their effect:—that is to say, in its exchange of vapour with the ocean, it gives as much as it receives. This arises not so much from its low elevation, as from the peculiar dip of the mountains that guide the waters into its bosom. Place it in a colder position—*cæteris paribus*—and in time it would cut the canal for its own drainage. So with the Caspian Sea, the Aral, and the Dead. No, my friend; the existence of the Salt Lake supports my theory. Around its shores lies

a fertile country; fertile from the quick returns of its own waters moistening it with rain. It exists only to a limited extent; and cannot influence the whole region of the desert, which lies parched and sterile, on account of its great distance from the ocean."

"But does not the vapour rising from the ocean float over the desert?"

"It *does*, I have said, to some extent, else there would be *no* rain here. Sometimes by extraordinary causes, such as high winds, it is carried into the heart of the continent in large masses. Then we have storms, and fearful ones too. But, generally, it is only the skirt of a cloud, so to speak, that reaches thus far; and that combined with the *proper* evaporation of the region itself—that is from its own springs and rivers, yields all the rain that falls upon it. Great bodies of vapour, rising from the Pacific and drifting eastward, first impinge

upon the Coast range, and there deposit their waters; or perhaps they are more highly heated, and, soaring above the tops of these mountains, travel farther. They will be intercepted a hundred miles farther on by the loftier ridges of the Sierra Nevada; and carried back, as it were captive, to the ocean, by the streams of the Sacramento and San Joaquin. It is only the skirt of these clouds—as I have termed it—that, soaring still higher, and escaping the attractive influence of the Nevada, floats on, and falls into the desert region. What then? No sooner has it fallen, than it hurries back to the sea, by the Gila and Colorado, to rise again, and fertilize the slopes of the Nevada; while the fragment of some other cloud drifts its scanty supply over the arid uplands of the interior, to be spent in rain or snow upon the peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Hence the source of the rivers running east and west; and hence the oases—such as the

"parks" that lie among these mountains. Hence the fertile valleys upon the Del Norté, and other streams that thinly meander through this central land.

Vapour-clouds, from the Atlantic, undergo a similar detention in crossing the Alleghany range; or cooling—after having circled a great distance round the globe—descend into the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi. From all sides of this great continent, as you approach its centre, fertility declines; and only from the want of water. The soil in many places, where there is scarcely a blade of grass to be seen, possesses all the elements of vegetation. So the Doctor here will tell you; he has analysed it."

"Ya! ya! dat ish true," quietly affirmed the Doctor.

"There are many oases," continued Seguin; "and, where water can be used to irrigate the soil, luxuriant vegetation is the con-

sequence. You have observed this, no doubt, in travelling down the river; and such was the case in the old Spanish settlements on the Gila."

"But why were these abandoned?" I inquired, never having heard any reason assigned for the desertion of these once flourishing colonies.

"Why!" echoed Seguin, with a peculiar energy; "why! Unless some other race than the Iberian take possession of these lands, the Apaché, the Navajo, and the Comanche —the conquered of Cortez and his conquerors—will yet drive the descendants of those very conquerors from the soil of Mexico! Look at Sonora and Chihuahua, half depopulated! Look at New Mexico—its citizens living by sufferance! living, as it were, to till the land, and feed the flocks for the support of their own enemies, who levy their black-mail by the year! But come! the sun tells us we must on. Come!"

"Mount! we can go through," continued

he. "There has been no rain lately, and the water is low—otherwise we should have fifteen miles of a ride over the mountain yonder. Keep close to the rocks! Follow me!"

And, with this admonition, he entered the Cañon, followed by myself, Godé, and the Doctor.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCALP-HUNTERS.

It was still early in the evening, when we reached the camp—the camp of the Scalp-hunters! Our arrival was scarcely noticed. A single glance at us, as we rode in amongst the men, was all the recognition we received. No one rose from his seat, or ceased his occupation. We were left to unsaddle our horses, and dispose of them, as we best might!

I was wearied with the ride, having been so long unused to the saddle. I threw my

blanket on the ground; and sat down, resting my back against the stump of a tree. I could have slept, but the strangeness of every thing around me excited my imagination; and, with feelings of curiosity, I looked and listened.

I should call the pencil to my aid to give you an idea of the scene; and that would but faintly illustrate it. A wilder and more picturesque *coup-d'œil* never impressed human vision. It reminded me of pictures, I had seen, representing the bivouacks of brigands under the dark pines of the Abruzzi.

I paint from a recollection that looks back over many years of adventurous life. I can give only the more salient points of the picture. The *petite detail* is forgotten; although, at that time, the minutest objects were things new and strange to my eye, and each of them for awhile fixed my attention. I afterwards grew familiar with them; and, hence, they are now in my memory, as a

multitude of other things, indistinct from their very distinctness!

The camp was in a bend of the Del Norté—in a glade—surrounded by tall cottonwoods—whose smooth trunks rose vertically out of a thick underwood of palmettos, and Spanish bayonet. A few tattered tents stood in the open ground; and there were skin lodges after the Indian fashion. But most of the hunters had made their shelter with a buffalo-robe stretched upon four upright poles. There were "lairs" among the underwood—constructed of branches, and thatched with the palmated leaves of the yuca, or with reeds brought from the adjacent river.

There were paths leading out in different directions, marked by openings in the foliage. Through one of these a green meadow was visible. Mules and mustangs, picketed on long trail-ropes, were clustered over it.

Through the camp were seen the saddles,

bridles, and packs—resting upon stumps or hanging from the branches. Guns leaned against the trees; and rusted sabres hung suspended over the tents and lodges. Articles of camp furniture—such as pans, kettles, and axes—littered the ground in every direction.

Log fires were burning. Around them sat clusters of men. They were not seeking warmth, for it was not cold. They were roasting ribs of venison, or smoking odd-fashioned pipes. Some were scouring their arms and accoutrements.

The accents of many languages fell upon my ear. I heard snatches of French, Spanish, English, and Indian. The exclamations were in character with the appearance of those who uttered them. "Hilloa, Dick! hang it, old hoss—what are ye 'bout?" "Sacre! enfant de Gârce!" "Carrambo!" "Pardieu, Monsieur!" "By the tarnal airthquake!" "Vaya! Hombre, Vaya!"

"Carajo!" "By Gosh!" "Santissima Maria!" "Sacr-r-re!"

It seemed as if the different nations had sent representatives, to contest the supremacy of their shibboleth.

I was struck with three groups. A particular language prevailed in each; and there was a homogeneousness about the costumes of the men composing each. That nearest me conversed in the Spanish language. They were Mexicans. I will describe the dress of one, as I remember it.

Calzoneros, of green velveteen. These are cut after the fashion of sailor-trousers —short-waist—tight round the hips, and wide at the bottoms, where they are strengthened by black leather, stamped and stitched ornamentally. The outer seams are split from hip to thigh, slashed with braid, and set with rows of silver castle-stops. These seams are open—for the evening is warm—and underneath appear the

calzoncillos of white muslin, hanging in wide folds around the ankles. The boot is of calf-skin, tanned, but not blackened. It is reddish, rounded at the toe, and carries a spur at least a pound in weight, with a rowel three inches in diameter! The spur is curiously fashioned, and fastened to the boot by straps of stamped leather. Little bells —*campanillas*—hang from the teeth of the rowels, and tinkle at the slightest motion of the foot! Look upward. The calzoneros are not braced, but fastened at the waist by a silken sash or scarf. It is scarlet. It is passed several times around the body, and made fast behind; where the fringed ends hang gracefully over the left hip. There is no vest. A jacket of dark cloth, embroidered and tightly fitting; short behind—*à la Grec* —leaving the shirt to puff out over the scarf. The shirt itself, with its broad collar and flowered front, exhibits the triumphant skill of some dark-eyed *poblana*. Over all this,

is the broad-brimmed shadowy sombrero—a heavy hat of black glaze, with its thick band of silver bullion. There are tags of the same metal, stuck in the sides—giving it an appearance altogether unique. Over one shoulder is hanging—half folded—the picturesque *serapé*. A belt and pouch—an escopette upon which the hand is resting—a waist-belt with a pair of small pistols stuck under it—a long Spanish knife suspended obliquely across the left hip—complete the *tout ensemble* of him, whom I have chosen to describe.

It may answer as a characteristic of the dress of many of his companions, those of the group that was nearest me. There was variety in their habiliments, yet the national costume of Mexico was traceable in all. Some wore leathern calzoneros, with a spencer or jerkin of the same material, close both in front and behind. Some carried, instead of the pictured serapé, the blanket of the Navajoes, with its broad black

stripes. Suspended from the shoulders of others hung the beautiful and graceful *manga*. Some were moccasoned; while a few of the inferior men wore the simple *guaraché*—the sandal of the Aztecs.

The countenances of these men were swarth and savage-looking—their hair long, straight, and black as the wing of a crow; while both beard and moustache grew wildly over their faces. Fierce dark eyes gleamed under the broad brims of their hats. Few of them were men of high stature; yet there was a litheness in their bodies, that showed them to be capable of great activity. Their frames were well knit, and inured to fatigues and hardship. They were all, or nearly all, natives of the Mexican border—frontiers-men — who had often closed in deadly fight with the Indian foe. They were *ciboleros*, *vaqueros*, *rancheros*, *monteros*; men, who in their frequent association with the *mountain men*, the Gallic and Saxon hunters from the eastern plains had acquired a degree

of daring, which by no means belongs to their own race. They were the chivalry of the Mexican frontier.

They smoked cigarritos—rolling them between their fingers in husks of maize. They played *monté* on their spread blankets, staking their tobacco. They cursed, and cried "Carajo," when they lost, and thanks to the "Santissima virgen," when the cards were pulled out in their favour!

Their language was a Spanish patois—their voices sharp and disagreeable.

At a short distance from these, was the second group that attracted my attention. The individuals composing this were altogether different from the former. They were different in every essential point—in voice, dress, language, and phisiognomy. Theirs was the Anglo-American face, at a glance. These were the trappers—the prairie hunters—the *mountain men.*

Let us again choose a type that may answer for a description of all.

He stands, leaning on his long straight rifle, looking into the fire. He is six feet in his moccasons; and of a build, that suggests the idea of strength and Saxon ancestry. His arms are like young oaks; and his hand, grasping the muzzle of his gun, is large, fleshless, and muscular. His cheek is broad and firm. It is partially covered by a bushy whisker, that meets over the chin and fringes all around the lips. It is neither fair nor dark; but of a dull, brown colour, lighter around the mouth, where it has been bleached by the sun, "amber," and water. The eye is grey, or bluish grey, small, and slightly crowed at the corner. It is well set, and rarely wanders. It seems to look *into* you, rather than *at* you. The hair is brown, and of a medium length, (cut, no doubt, on his last visit to the trading post, or the settlements); and the complexion, although dark as that of a mulatto, is only so from tan. It was once fair—a

blonde. The countenance is not unprepossessing. It might be styled handsome. Its whole expression is bold, but good-humoured, and generous.

The dress of the individual described is of home manufacture—that is, of *his* home, the prairie, and the wild mountain park—where the material has been bought by a bullet from his rifle. It is the work of his own hands—unless indeed he may be one, who, in his moments of lassitude, has shared his cabin with some Indian damsel, Sioux, Crow, or Cheyenne.

It consists of a hunting shirt of dressed deer-skin, smoked to the softness of a glove. Leggings reaching to the waist, and mocassons of the same material—the latter soled with the *parflêche* of the buffalo. The shirt is belted at the waist, but open at the breast and throat, where it falls back into a graceful cape just covering the shoulders. Underneath is seen the undershirt, of finer material—the dressed skin of the antelope, or the fawn

of the fallow deer. On his head is a racoon cap, with the face of the animal looking to the front; while the barred tail hangs like a plume drooping down to his left shoulder.

His accoutrements are, a bullet pouch made from the undressed skin of the mountain cat, and a huge crescent-shaped horn—upon which he has carved many a strange souvenir. His arms consist of a long knife, a bowie, and a heavy pistol, carefully secured by a holster to the leathern belt around his waist. Add to this a rifle nearly five feet long, taking ninety to the pound; and so straight, that the line of the barrel scarcely deflects from that of the butt!

But little attention has been paid to ornament in either his dress, arms, or equipments; and yet there is a gracefulness in the hang of his tunic-like shirt; a stylishness about the fringing of the cape and leggings; and a jauntiness in the set of that coonskin cap, that shows the wearer to be not altogether

unmindful of his personal appearance. A small pouch or case, neatly embroidered with stained porcupine quills, hangs upon his breast.

At intervals, he contemplates this with a pleased and complacent look. It is his pipe-holder—a love-token from some dark-eyed, dark-haired damsel, no doubt, like himself, a denizen of the wild wilderness. Such is the *tout ensemble* of a mountain trapper.

There were many around him whom I have described, almost similarly attired and equipped. Some wore slouch hats of greyish felt; and some catskin caps. Some had hunting shirts bleached to a brighter hue, and broidered with gayer colours. Others looked more tattered and patched, and smoky; yet in the costume of all there was enough of character to enable you to class them. There was no possibility of mistaking the regular "*mountain man.*"

The third group, that attracted my attention, was at a greater distance from the spot I occupied. I was filled with curiosity, not to say astonishment, on perceiving that they *were Indians!*

"Can they be prisoners?" thought I. "No; they are not bound. There are no signs of captivity, either in their looks or gestures; and yet they are Indians! can *they* belong to the band, fighting against — ?"

As I sat conjecturing, a hunter passed near me.

"Who are these Indians?" I asked, indicating the group.

"Delawares—some Shawnee."

These then were the celebrated Delawares —descendants of that great tribe, who on the Atlantic shores first gave battle to the pale-faced invader. Theirs has been a wonderful history. War their school, war their worship, war their pastime, war their profession! They are now but a remnant. Their story will soon be ended!

I rose up; and approached them with a feeling of interest. Some of them were sitting around the fire, smoking out of curiously carved pipes of the red claystone. Others strode back and forth, with that majestic gait for which the "forest" Indian has been so much celebrated. There was a silence among them, that contrasted strangely with the jabbering kept up by their Mexican allies. An occasional question put in a deep-toned sonorous voice—a short but emphatic reply—a guttural grunt—a dignified nod—a gesture with the hand—and thus they conversed, as they filled their pipe-bowls with the *kini-kin-ik*, and passed the valued instruments from one to another.

I stood gazing upon these stoical sons of the forest, with emotions stronger than curiosity; as one contemplates for the first time an object of which he has heard and read strange accounts. The history of their wars and their wanderings were

fresh in my memory. Before me were the actors themselves—or types of them—in all their truthful reality, in all their wild picturesqueness. These were the men who, driven from their homes, by the Atlantic border, yielded only to fate—to the destiny of their race. Crossing the Appalachian range—they had fought their way from home to home—down the steep sides of the Alleghany—along the wooded banks of the Ohio, into the heart of the "Bloody Ground." Still the pale face followed on their track, and drove them onward—onward to the setting sun. Red wars—Punic faith—broken treaties—year after year, thinned their ranks. Still, disdaining to live near their white conquerors, they pushed on—fighting their way through tribes of their own race and colour, thrice their numbers! The forks of the Osage became their latest resting-place. Here the usurper promised to guarantee them a home, to be theirs to all time. The

concession came too late. War and wandering had grown to be part of their natures; and with a scornful pride, they disdained the peaceful tillage of the soil. The remnant of their tribe was collected on the Osage; but in one season it had disappeared! The braves and young men wandered away, leaving only the old, the women, and the worthless in their allotted home! Where have they gone? Where are they now? He, who would find the Delawares, must seek them on the broad prairies—in the mountain parks—in the haunts of the bear and the beaver—the bighorn and the buffalo. There he may find them, in scattered bands, leagued with their ancient enemies, the whites, or alone; trapping, hunting, fighting the Yuta, or Rapaho, the Crow or Cheynne, the Navajo and the Apaché.

I stood gazing upon the group, with feelings of profound interest—upon their features, and their picturesque habiliments. Though no

two of them were dressed exactly alike, there was a similarity about the dress of all. Most of them wore hunting shirts, not made of deerskin—like those of the whites—but of calico, printed in bright patterns. This dress, handsomely fashioned and fringed, under the accoutrements of the Indian warrior, presented a striking appearance. But that which chiefly distinguished the costumes of both the Delaware and Shawano, from that of their white allies, was the head-dress. This was, in fact, a turban, formed by binding the head with a scarf or kerchief of a brilliant colour—such as may be seen on the dark creoles of Hayti. In the group before me, no two of these turbans were alike, yet they were all of a similar character. The finest were those made by the chequered kerchiefs of Madras. Plumes surmounted them, of coloured feathers, from the wing of the war eagle, or the blue plumage of the gruya.

For the rest of their costume, they wore deerskin leggings and moccasons, nearly similar to those of the trappers. The leggings of some were ornamented by scalp locks along the outer seam—exhibiting a dark history of the wearer's prowess! I noticed that their moccasons were peculiar—differing altogether from those worn by the Indians of the prairies. They were seamed up the fronts, without braiding or ornament; and gathered into a double row of plaits.

The arms and equipments of these warrior men were like those of the white hunters. They have long since discarded the bow; and in the management of the rifle, most of them can "draw a bead," and hit "plum centre," with any of their mountain associates. In addition to the firelock and knife, I noticed that they still carried the ancient weapon of their race—the fearful tomahawk.

I have described three characteristic

groups that struck me on glancing over the camp ground. There were individuals belonging to neither; and others partaking of the character of one or all. There were Frenchmen—Canadian voyageurs—strays of the North-west company—wearing white capotes; and chattering, dancing, and singing their boat songs with all the *esprit* of their race. There were Pueblos—Indios manzos—clad in their ungraceful tilmas—and rather serving than associating with those around them. There were mulattoes, too; and negroes of a jetty blackness, from the plantations of Louisiana—who had exchanged for this free roving life, the twisted "cowskin" of the overseer. There were tattered uniforms—showing the deserters, who had wandered from some frontier post, into this remote region. There were Kanakas from the Sandwich Isles, who had crossed the deserts from California. There were men apparently of every hue and clime

and tongue, here assembled—drawn together by the accidence of life—by the instinct of adventure—all more or less strange individuals of the strangest band it has ever been my lot to witness—*the band of the* SCALP-HUNTERS!

CHAPTER XXI.

SHARP-SHOOTING.

I HAD returned to my blanket, and was about to stretch myself upon it, when the whoop of a "gruya" drew my attention. Looking up, I saw one of these birds flying towards the camp. It was coming through a break in the trees that opened from the river. It flew low, and tempted a shot with its broad wings, and slow lazy flight.

A report rang upon the air! One of the Mexicans had fired his escopette; but the bird flew on, plying its wings with more energy, as if to bear itself out of reach.

There was a laugh from the trappers, and a voice cried out—

"Yur cussed fool! d' yur think 'ee kud hit a spread blanket wi' that beetle-shaped blunderbox? Pish!"

I turned to see who had delivered this odd speech. Two men were poising their rifles, bringing them to bear upon the bird. One was the young hunter whom I have described. The other was an Indian whom I had not seen before.

The cracks were simultaneous: and the crane, dropping its long deck, came whirling down among the trees, where it caught upon a high branch, and remained.

From their position, neither party knew that the other had fired. A tent was between them; and the two reports had seemed as one. A trapper cried out—

"Well done, Garey! Lord help the thing that's afore old Kilbar's muzzle, when you squints through her hind sights."

The Indian just then stepped round the tent.

Hearing this side speech, and perceiving the smoke still oozing from the muzzle of the young hunter's gun, he turned to the latter with the interrogation—

"Did *you* fire, sir?"

This was said in well accentuated and most un-Indian-like English, which would have drawn my attention to the man, had not his singularly imposing appearance riveted me already.

"Who is he?" I inquired from one near me.

"Don't know—fresh arriv," was the short answer.

"Do you mean that he is a stranger here?"

"Jest so. He kumd in thar awhile agone. Don't b'lieve anybody knows him. I guess the captain does; I seed them shake hands."

I looked at the Indian with increasing interest. He seemed a man of about thirty

years of age, and not much under seven feet in height! He was proportioned like an Apollo; and, on this account, appeared smaller than he actually was. His features were of the Roman type; and his fine forehead, his aquiline nose and broad jaw-bone, gave him the appearance of talent, as well as firmness and energy. He was dressed in a hunting shirt, leggings and moccasons; but all these differed from anything worn either by the hunters, or their Indian allies. The shirt itself was made out of the dressed hide of the red deer; but differently prepared to that used by the trappers. It was bleached almost to the whiteness of a kid glove! The breast—unlike theirs—was close, and beautifully embroidered with stained porcupine quills. The sleeves were similarly ornamented; and the cape and skirts were trimmed with the soft, snow-white fur of the ermine. A row of entire skins of that animal hung from the skirt border, forming a fringe

both graceful and costly. But the most singular feature about this man was his hair. It fell loosely over his shoulders, and swept the ground as he walked! It could not have been less than seven feet in length. It was black, glossy, and luxuriant; and reminded me of the tails of those great Flemish horses, I had seen, in the funeral carriages of London.

He wore upon his head the war-eagle bonnet, with its full circle of plumes—the finest triumph of savage taste. This magnificent head-dress added to the majesty of his appearance.

A white buffalo robe hung from his shoulders, with all the graceful draping of a toga. Its silky fur corresponded to the colour of his dress, and contrasted strikingly with his own dark tresses.

There were other ornaments about his person. His arms and accoutrements were shining with metallic brightness; and the

stock and butt of his rifle were richly inlaid with silver.

I have been thus minute in my description, as the first appearance of this man impressed me with a picture that can never be effaced from my memory. He was the *beau ideal* of a picturesque and romantic savage; and yet there was nothing savage either in his speech or bearing. On the contrary, the interrogation which he had just addressed to the trapper was put in the politest manner. The reply was not so courteous.

"Did I fire? Didn't ye hear a crack? Didn't ye see the thing fall? Look yonder!"

Garey, as he spoke, pointed up to the bird.

"We must have fired simultaneously."

As the Indian said this, he appealed to his gun, which was still smoking at the muzzle.

"Look hyar, Injun! whether we fired symultainyously, or extraneously, or cattawampously, aint the flappin o' a beaver's tail

to me; but I tuk sight on that bird; I hut that bird; and 'twar my bullet brought the thing down."

"I think I must have hit it too," replied the Indian, modestly.

"That's like, with that ar spangled gimcrack," said Garey, looking disdainfully at the other's gun, and then proudly at his own brown weather-beaten piece—which he had just wiped, and was about to reload.

"Gimcrack or no," answered the Indian, "she sends a bullet straighter and farther, than any piece I have hitherto met with. I'll warrant she has sent hers through the body of the crane."

"Look hyar, mister; for I s'pose we must call a gentleman 'mister' who speaks so fine an looks so fine, tho' he be's an Injun; its mighty easy to settle who hut the bird. That thing's a fifty, or tharabout's; Kilbar's a ninety. 'Taint hard to tell which has plugged the varmint. We'll soon see;"

and so saying, the hunter stepped off toward the tree, on which hung the gruya, high up.

"How are ye to get it down?" cried one of the men, who had stepped forward to witness the settlement of this curious dispute.

There was no reply, for every one saw that Garey was poising his rifle for a shot. The crack followed; and the branch, shivered by his bullet, bent downward under the weight of the gruya! But the bird, caught in a double fork, still stuck fast on the broken limb.

A murmur of approbation followed the shot. These were men not accustomed to hurrah loudly at a trivial incident.

The Indian now approached, having reloaded his piece. Taking aim, he struck the branch at the shattered point, cutting it clean from the tree! The bird fell to the ground, amidst expressions of applause from the spectators, but chiefly from the Mexican and Indian hunters. It was at once picked

up and examined. *Two bullets had passed through its body!* Either would have killed it.

A shadow of unpleasant feeling was visible on the face of the young trapper. In the presence of so many hunters of every nation, to be thus equalled—beaten—in the use of his favourite weapon—and by an "Injun,"—still worse by one of "them ar gingerbread guns." The mountain men have no faith in an ornamented stock or a big bore. Spangled rifles, they say, are like spangled razors, made for selling to "greenhorns." It was evident, however, that the strange Indian's rifle had been made to shoot as well.

It required all the strength of nerve, which the trapper possessed, to conceal his chagrin. Without saying a word, he commenced wiping out his gun, with that stoical calmness peculiar to men of his calling. I observed that he proceeded to load with more than

usual care. It was evident that he would not rest satisfied with the trial already made, but would either beat the "Injun" or be himself "whipped into shucks." So he declared, in a muttered speech to his comrades.

His piece was soon loaded; and, swinging her to the hunter's carry, he turned to the crowd—now collected from all parts of the camp.

"Thar's one kind o' shootin'," said he, "that's jest as easy as fallin' off a log. Any man kin do it, as kin look straight through hind-sights. But then thar's another kind, that ain't so easy; it needs narve."

Here the trapper paused; and looked toward the Indian, who was also re-loading.

"Look hyar, strenger!" continued he, addressing the latter. "Have ye got a cummarade on the ground, as knows yer shootin'."

The Indian, after a moment's hesitation, answered "Yes."

"Kin yer cummarade depend on yer shot?"

"Oh! I think so. Why do you wish to know that?"

"Why—I'm a goin' to show ye a shot we sometimes practise at Bent's Fort, jest to tickle the greenhorns. 'Taint much o' a shot, naythe; but it tries the narves a little, I reckon. Hoy! Rube!"

"D—n yur! What do 'ee want?"

This was spoken in an energetic and angry-like voice, that turned all eyes to the quarter whence it proceeded. At the first glance, there seemed to be no one in that direction. In looking more carefully, among the logs and stumps, an individual was discovered, seated by one of the fires. It would have been difficult to tell that it was a human body, had not the arms at the moment been in motion. The back was turned toward the crowd, and the head had disappeared, sunk forward over the fire. The object, from where we were standing, looked more like the stump of a

cottonwood, dressed in dirt-coloured buck-skin, than the body of a human being. In getting nearer, and round to the front of it, it was seen to be a man—though a very curious one—holding a long rib of deer-meat in both hands, which he was polishing with a very poor set of teeth.

The whole appearance of this individual was odd and striking. His dress—if dress it could be called—was simple as it was savage. It consisted of what might have once been a hunting shirt, but which now looked more like a leathern bag with the bottom ripped open, and sleeves sewed into the sides. It was of a dirty-brown colour, wrinkled at the hollow of the arms, patched around the armpits, and greasy all over: it was fairly "caked" with dirt! There was no attempt at either ornament or fringe. There had been a cape; but this had evidently been drawn upon, from time to time, for patches and other uses, until scarcely a vestige of it

remained. The leggings and moccasons were on a par with the shirt; and seemed to have been manufactured out of the same hide. They too were dirt-brown, patched, wrinkled, and greasy. They did not meet each other, but left a piece of the ankle bare; and that also was dirt-brown, like the buckskin. There was no undershirt, vest, or other garment to be seen, with the exception of a close-fitting cap, which had once been catskin; but the hair was all worn off it—leaving a greasy, leathery-looking surface, that corresponded well with the other parts of the dress. Cap, shirt, leggings, and moccasons, looked as if they had never been stripped off, since the day they were first tried on; and that might have been many a year ago. The shirt was open—displaying the naked breast and throat—and these, as well as the face, hands, and ankles, had been tanned by the sun, and smoked by the fire, to the hue of rusty copper. The

whole man—clothes and all—looked as if he had been smoked on purpose!

His face bespoke a man of sixty. The features were sharp and somewhat aquiline; and the small eye was dark, quick, and piercing. His hair was black and cut short. His complexion had been naturally brunette, though there was nothing of the Frenchman or Spaniard in his physiognomy. He was more likely of the black Saxon breed.

As I looked at this man (for I had walked towards him, prompted by some instinct of curiosity), I began to fancy that there was a strangeness about him, independent of the oddness of his attire. There seemed to be something peculiar about his head—something wanting. What was it? I was not long in conjecture. When fairly in front of him, I saw what was wanting. *It was his ears!*

This discovery impressed me with a feeling

akin to awe. There is something awful in a man without his ears. It suggests some horrid drama—some terrible scene of cruel vengeance. It suggests the idea of crime committed, and punishment inflicted.

These thoughts were wandering through my mind, when all at once I remembered a remark which Seguin had made on the previous night. This, then, thought I, is the person of whom he spoke. My mind was satisfied.

After making answer as above, the old fellow sat for some time, with his head between his knees—chewing, mumbling, and growling, like a lean old wolf, angry at being disturbed in his meal.

"Come hyar, Rube! I want ye a bit," continued Garey, in a tone of half entreaty.

"And so 'ee will want me a bit; this child don't move a d—d peg, till he has cleaned this hyur rib—he don't—now!"

"Dog-gone it man! make haste then," and the impatient trapper dropped the butt

of his rifle to the ground; and stood waiting in sullen silence.

After chewing, and mumbling, and growling a few minutes longer, old Rube—for that was the name by which the leathery sinner was known—slowly erected his lean carcase; and came walking up to the crowd.

"What do 'ee want, Billee?" he inquired, going up to the trapper.

"I want ye to hold this," answered Garey, offering him a round white shell, about the size of a watch; a species, of which there were many strewed over the ground.

"Is't a bet, boyee?"

"No, it is not."

"Aint wastin' yur powder, ar yur."

"I've been beat shootin," replied the trapper in an under tone, "by that ar Injun."

The old man looked over, to where the strange Indian was standing erect and

majestic, in all the pride of his plumage. There was no appearance of triumph or swagger about him, as he stood leaning on his rifle, in an attitude at once calm and dignified.

It was plain from the way old Rube surveyed him, that he had seen him before—though not in that camp. After passing his eyes over him from head to foot—and there resting them a moment—a low murmur escaped his lips, which ended abruptly in the word "Coco."

"A Coco do ye think?" inquired the other with an apparent interest.

"Are 'ee blind, Billee? Don't 'ee see his moccasson?"

"Yes, you're right, but I was in thar nation two years ago. I seed no sich man as that."

"He w'ant there."

"Whar then?"

"Whur thur's no great show o' redskins.

He *may* shoot well; he did onecest on a time —plum centre."

"You knew him, did ye?"

"O-ee-es. Onecest. Putty squaw,—hansum gal. Whur do'ee want me to go?"

I thought that Garey seemed inclined to carry the conversation farther. There was an evident interest in his manner, when the other mentioned the "squaw." Perhaps he had some tender recollection; but, seeing the other preparing to start off, he pointed to an open glade, that stretched eastward; and simply answered, "Sixty."

"Take care o' my claws, d' yur hear! Them Injuns has made 'em scace; this child can't spare another."

The old trapper said this, with a flourish of his right hand. I noticed, that the little finger had been chopped off!

"Never fear, old hoss!" was the reply; and, at this, the smoky carcase moved away,

with a slow and regular pace, that showed he was measuring the yards.

When he had stepped the sixtieth yard, he faced about, and stood erect—placing his heels together. He then extended his right arm—raising it until his hand was on a level with his shoulder—and, holding the shell in his fingers, flat side to the front, shouted back—

"Now, Bill-ee shoot, an be d—d to yur!"

The shell was slightly concave—the concavity turned to the front. The thumb and finger reached half around the circumference—so that a part of the edge was hidden; and the surface, turned towards the marksman, was not larger than the dial of a common watch!

This was a fearful sight. It is one not so common among the mountain men, as travellers would have you believe. The feat proves the markman's skill—first, if successful, by showing the strength and steadiness of his

nerves: secondly, by the confidence which the other reposes in it, thus declared by stronger testimony than any oath. In any case, the feat of holding the mark is at least equal to that of hitting it. There are many hunters willing to risk taking the shot, but few who care to hold the shell.

It was a fearful sight; and my nerves tingled as I looked on. Many others felt as I. No one interfered. There were few present who would have dared—even had these two men been making preparation to fire at each other! Both were "men of mark" among their comrades—trappers of the first class.

Garey, drawing a long breath, planted himself firmly—the heel of his left foot opposite to, and some inches in advance of the hollow of his right. Then, jerking up his gun, and throwing the barrel across his left palm, he cried out to his comrade:

"Steady, old bone an sinyer! hyar's at ye!"

The words were scarcely out, when the gun was levelled. There was a moment's deathlike silence—all eyes looking to the mark. Then came the crack—and the shell was seen to fly, shivered into fifty fragments! There was a cheer from the crowd. Old Rube stooped to pick up one of the pieces; and, after examining it for a moment, shouted in a loud voice:

"Plum centre, by G—d!"

The young trapper had, in effect, hit the mark in the very centre—as the blue stain of the bullet testified.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEAT A LA TELL.

All eyes are turned upon the strange Indian. During the scene described, he has stood silent and calmly looking on. His eye now wanders over the ground, apparently in search of an object.

A small convolvulus—known as the "prairie gourd"—is lying at his feet. It is globe-shaped, about the size of an orange, and not unlike one in colour. He stoops and takes it up. He seems to examine it with great care, balancing it upon his hand, as though he was calculating its weight!

What does he intend to do with this? Will he fling it up, and send his bullet through it in the air? What else?

His motions are watched in silence. Nearly all the scalp-hunters—sixty or seventy—are on the ground. Seguin, only, with the Doctor and a few men, is engaged some distance off pitching a tent. Garey stands upon one side, slightly elated with his triumph; but not without feelings of apprehension that he may yet be beaten. Old Rube has gone back to the fire; and is roasting another rib.

The gourd seems to satisfy the Indian—for whatever purpose he intends it. A long piece of bone—the thigh joint of the war-eagle—hangs suspended over his breast. It is curiously carved, and pierced with holes like a musical instrument. It *is* one.

He places this to his lips—covering the holes with his fingers. He sounds three notes—oddly inflected—but loud and sharp.

He drops the instrument again, and stands looking eastward into the woods. The eyes of all present are bent in the same direction. The hunters, influenced by a mysterious curiosity, remain silent; or speak only in low mutterings.

Like an echo, the three notes are answered by a similar signal! It is evident that the Indian has a comrade in the woods; yet not one of the band seems to know aught of him; or his comrade. Yes —one does. It is Rube.

"Look'ee hyur boyees!" cries he, squinting over his shoulders. "I'll stake this rib agin a griskin o' poor bull, that 'ee'll see the puttiest gal as'ee ever set yur eyes on."

There is no reply—we are gazing too intently for the expected arrival.

A rustling is heard, as of some one parting the bushes—the tread of a light foot—the snapping of twigs. A bright object

appears among the leaves. Some one is coming through the underwood. It is a woman!

It is an Indian girl, attired in a singular and picturesque costume.

She steps out of the bushes; and comes boldly towards the crowd. All eyes are turned upon her, with looks of wonder and admiration. We scan her face and figure and her striking attire.

She is dressed not unlike the Indian himself; and there is a resemblance in other respects. The tunic worn by the girl is of finer materials—of fawn skin. It is richly trimmed; and worked with split quills, stained to a variety of bright colours. It hangs to the middle of the thighs, ending in a fringe work of shells, that tinkle as she moves.

Her limbs are wrapped in leggings of scarlet cloth, fringed like the tunic, and reaching to the ankles, where they meet the flaps of her moccasons. These last are white,

embroidered with stained quills, and fitting closely to her small feet.

A belt of wampum closes the tunic on her waist—exhibiting the globular developments of a full-grown bosom, and the undulating outlines of a womanly person. Her head-dress is similar to that worn by her companion, but smaller and lighter; and her hair, like his, hangs loosely down, reaching almost to the ground! Her neck, throat, and part of her bosom are nude, and clustered over with bead-strings of various colours.

The expression of her countenance is high and noble. Her eye is oblique. The lips meet with a double curve, and the throat is full and rounded. Her complexion is Indian; but a crimson hue struggling through the brown upon her cheek, gives that pictured expression to her countenance, that may be observed in the quadroon of the West Indies.

She is a girl, though full grown, and boldly developed—a type of health and savage beauty.

As she approaches, the men murmur their admiration. There are hearts beating under hunting shirts, that rarely deign to dream of the charms of woman.

I am struck, at this moment, with the appearance of the young trapper—Garey. His face has fallen—the blood has forsaken his cheeks—his lips are white and compressed, and dark rings have formed around his eyes! They express anger; but there is still another meaning in them.

Is it jealousy? Yes!

He has stepped behind one of his comrades, as if he did not wish to be seen. One hand is playing involuntarily with the handle of his knife! The other grasps the barrel of his gun, as though he would crush it between his fingers!

The girl comes up. The Indian hands

her the gourd, muttering some words in an unknown tongue—unknown at least to me. She takes it without making any reply, and walks off toward the spot, where Rube had stood—which has been pointed out to her by her companion.

She reaches the tree; and halts in front of it—facing round, as the trapper had done.

There was something so dramatic, so theatrical, in the whole proceeding, that, up to the present time, we had all stood waiting for the *denouément* in silence. Now we knew what it was to be; and the men began to talk.

"He's a'goin to shoot the gourd from the hand of the gal," suggested a hunter.

"No great shot after all," added another and indeed this was the silent opinion of most on the ground.

"Wagh? it don't beat Garey if he diz hit it," exclaimed a third.

What was our amazement, at seeing the

girl fling off her plumed bonnet—place the gourd upon her head—fold her arms over her bosom—and stand, fronting us, as calm and immobile, as if she had been carved upon the tree!

There was a murmur in the crowd. The Indian was raising his rifle to take aim, when a man rushed forward to prevent him. It was Garey!

"No, yer don't! No!" cried he, clutching the levelled rifle; "she's deceived *me*, that's plain; but I won't see the gal that once loved me, or said she did, in the trap that-a-way. No! Bill Garey ain't a-goin' to stand by, and see it."

"What is this?" shouted the Indian in a voice of thunder. "Who dares to interrupt me?"

"I dares," replied Garey. "She's you'rn now, I suppose. You may take her whar ye like; and take this too," continued he, tearing off the embroidered pipe case, and

flinging it at the Indian's feet; "but ye're not .a-goin to shoot her down, whiles I stand by."

"By what right do you interrupt me? My sister is not afraid, and—"

"Your *sister!*"

"Yes—my sister."

"And is yon gal your sister?" eagerly inquired Garey, his manner and the expression of his countenance all at once changing.

"She is. I have said, she is."

"And are you El Sol?"

"I am."

"I ask your pardon; but—"

"I pardon you. Let me proceed!"

"O, sir, do not—no! no! She is your sister, and I know you have the right, but thar's no needcessity. I have heerd of your shootin'. I give in you kin beat me. For God's sake, do not risk it—as you care for her, do not!"

"There is no risk. I will show you."

"No, no. If you must then, let me! I will hold it. O, let me!" stammered the hunter in tones of entreaty.

"Hilloo Billee!" What's the dratted rumpus?" cried Rube, coming up. "Hang it, man! let's see the shot. I've heern o' it afore. Don't be skeert, ye fool! he'll do it like a breeze—*he* will!"

And as the old trapper said this, he caught his comrade by the arm, and slung him round out of the Indian's way.

The girl, during all this, had stood still—seemingly not knowing the cause of the interruption. Garey's back was turned to her; and the distance—with two years of separation—doubtless prevented her from recognising him.

Before Garey could turn to interpose himself, the rifle was at the Indian's shoulder and levelled! His finger was on the

trigger, and his eye glanced through the sights. It was too late to interfere. Any attempt at that might bring about the dreaded result. The hunter, as he turned, saw this; and, halting in his tracks, stood straining and silent.

It was a moment of terrible suspense to all of us—a moment of intense emotions. The silence was profound. Every breath seemed suspended. Every eye was fixed on the yellow object, not larger, I have said, than an orange. O God! will the shot never come?

It came. The flash—the crack—the stream of fire—the wild hurrah—the forward rush—were all simultaneous things. We saw the shivered globe fly off. The girl was still upon her feet—she was safe!

I ran with the rest. The smoke for a moment blinded me. I heard the shrill notes of the Indian whistle. I looked before me. *The girl had disappeared!*

We ran on to the spot where she had stood. We heard a rustling in the underwood—a departing footstep. We knew it was she; but, guided by an instinct of delicacy, and a knowledge that it would be contrary to the wish of her brother, no one followed her.

We found the fragments of the calabash—strewed over the ground. We found the leaden mark upon them. The bullet itself was buried in the bark of the tree; and one of the hunters commenced digging it out with the point of his bowie.

When we turned to go back, we saw that the Indian had walked away, and now stood chatting easily and familiarly with Seguin.

As we re-entered the camp-ground, I observed Garey stoop and pick up a shining object. It was the *gage d'amour*, which he carefully re-adjusted around his neck, in its wonted position.

From his look, and the manner in which he handled it, it was plain that he now regarded that *souvenir* with more reverence than ever.

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